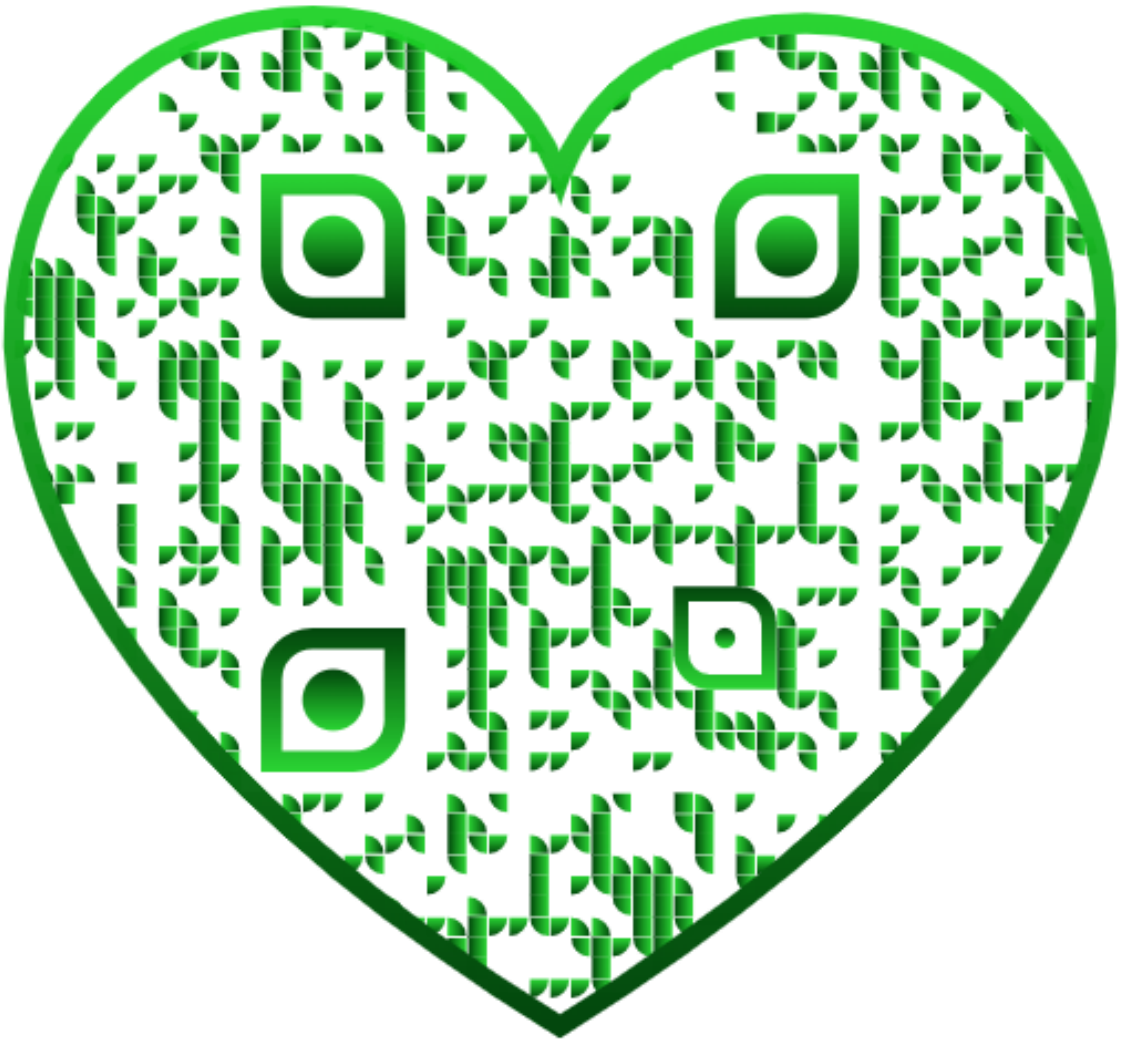
REVOLVER

ISSUE 165
FALL 2023

$UICIDEBOY$

Corey Taylor // Poppy // Code Orange // Baroness // The Armed // Spirit Adrift
Myrkur // 3TEETH // Wargasm // Twin Temple // Dying Wish // Orbit Culture // Sunami



REVOLVER

ISSUE 165
FALL 2023

POPPY

REVOLVER

COREY TAYLOR

$uicideboy$ // Poppy // Baroness // Code Orange // Twin Temple // The Armed
Myrkur // Wargasm // 3TEETH // Spirit Adrift // Dying Wish // Orbit Culture // Sunami

REVOLVER

ISSUE 165
FALL 2023

3 TEETH

$uicideboy$ // Poppy // Corey Taylor // Code Orange // Spirit Adrift // The Armed
Myrkur // Wargasm // Twin Temple // Baroness // Dying Wish // Orbit Culture // Sunami

REVOLVER

ISSUE 165
FALL 2023

BARONESS

REVOLVER

ISSUE 165
FALL 2023

CODE ORANGE

$uicideboy$ // Poppy // Corey Taylor // Baroness // The Armed // Spirit Adrift
Myrkur // Wargasm // 3TEETH // Dying Wish // Orbit Culture // Sunami

REVOLVER

ISSUE 165
FALL 2023

MYRKUR

REVOLVER

ISSUE 165
FALL 2023

THE ARMED

SUBSCRIBE

One-year (4 issues) for $25.00
RevolverMag.com/Subscribe

REVOLVER

FOREVER

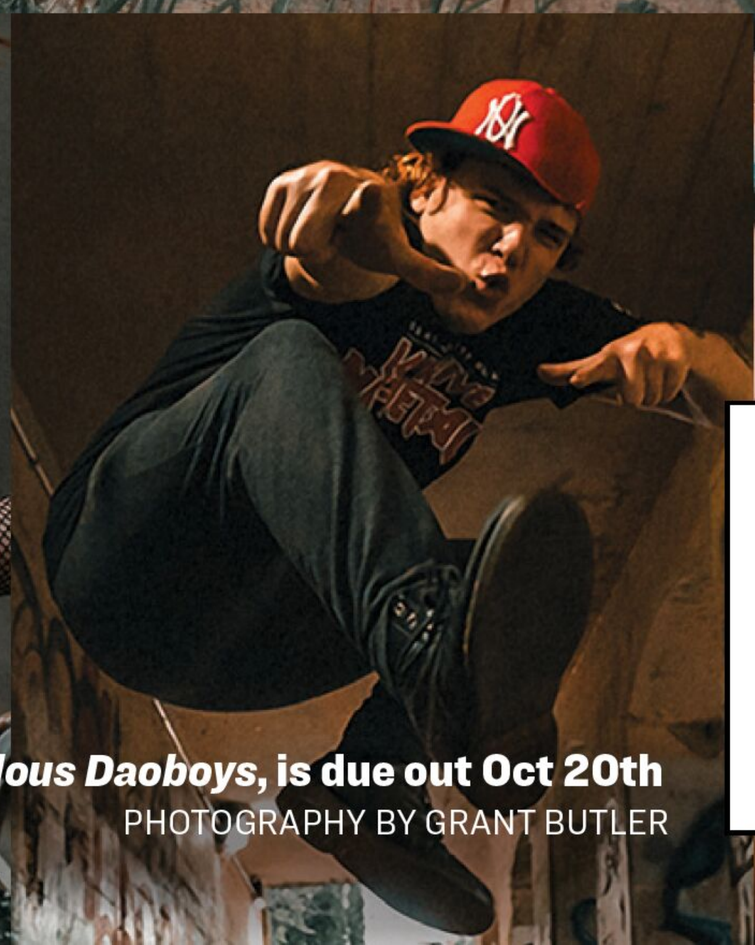
NÜ

LONG LIVE
NÜ-METAL

all day i dream
about nü-metal

all day i dream
about nü-metal

all day i dream
about nü-metal



The Callous Daoboys' new EP, *God Smiles Upon the Callous Daoboys*, is due out Oct 20th

PHOTOGRAPHY BY GRANT BUTLER

CONTENTS

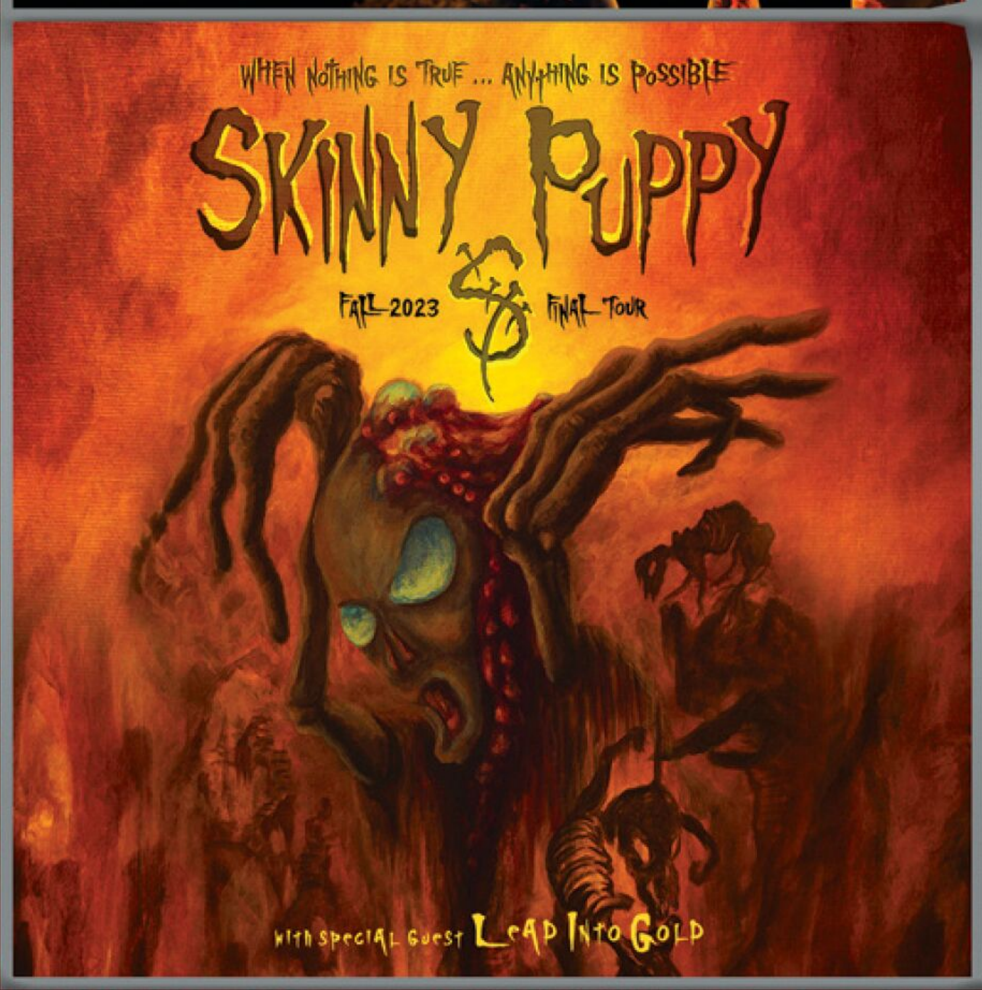
38

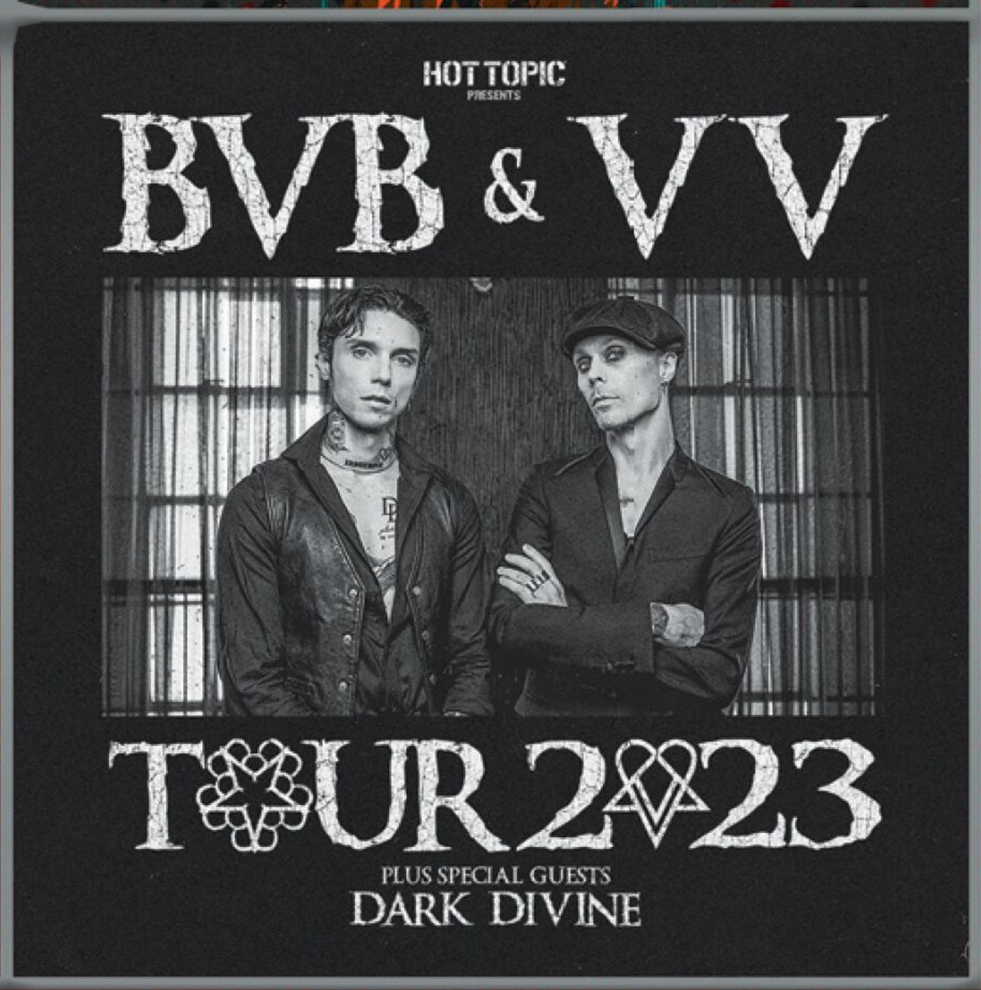
POPPY
After shedding the pain of a tumultuous relationship, the post-genre provocateur is back in control – and ready to dance

KATE BIEL

TURN UP THE VOLUME

WITH US THIS FALL





TICKETS ON SALE NOW AT LIVE NATION

CONTENTS

80

WARGASM
Milkie Way and Sam Matlock share the personal stories behind the things they love

9

Five Artists You Need to Know

Twin Temple, Spirit Adrift, Dying Wish, Orbit Culture and Sunami

28

$uicideboy$

Founded with a suicide pact, the NOLA trap-metal duo has far outlived their own expectations. This is the story of how they transcended their darkness.

46

Code Orange

The Pittsburgh heavyweights threw everything they had at their new album. It nearly broke them, and also might have set them free.

54

Corey Taylor

The Slipknot and Stone Sour frontman is known for fearlessly speaking his mind. We tested his mettle with our readers' hardest-hitting questions.

64

3TEETH

We follow industrial-metal leader Alexis Mincolla into the desert to experience the "off-world perspective" that reshaped his creative vision

74

Baroness

Twenty years in, the prog-sludge crew found a new "wide-open road." To get there, John Baizley had to face his nightmares and commune with the dead.

86

The Armed

Hardcore's weirdest, most mysterious band finally comes clean

92

Myrkur

Amalie Bruun reveals how her son, Valkyries and black metal led her back to humanity

JESSICA-ROSE LENA

EMPIRE STATE BASTARD

rivers of heresy

the debut album

out now

cd • lp • digital • cassette

ROADRUNNER RECORDS

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

THE FIRST TIME I SAW $UICIDEBOY$ LIVE WAS THE 2019 GREY DAY TOUR. I wasn't gonna miss it.

First of all, the lineup was stacked: Trash Talk, City Morgue, Turnstile, Denzel Curry and, of course, $uicideboy$, who had handpicked that insane roster of cutting-edge hip-hop and hardcore.

Secondly, they were all playing in pretty much my backyard — at Coney Island's Ford Amphitheatre, a 15-minute walk from my house. So, really, there was no excuse.

My wife and I were easily the oldest people there. And we owned it. At the time, the venue was experimenting with this super-premium section complete with plush, La-Z-Boy-style VIP seats right behind the mosh pit, where you could also order from the high-end restaurant next door. We ended up getting hooked up with two of those seats. Then we ordered a charcuterie platter and some fancy cocktails, kicked back and watched the kids kill each other in the pit. I can't lie — it was awesome.

All the performers were great and brought the energy, and $uicideboy$ had the crowd in the palm of their hands, but what really struck me that day was the audience itself. It seemed like everyone was wearing a metal shirt. Slipknot, in particular, dominated, but I also spotted Slayer, Misfits, Cradle of Filth, Mayhem, Knocked Loose, Power Trip and Full of Hell tees. You never would have guessed you were at a show headlined by a rap group.

I knew then that one day $uicideboy$ would have to be on *Revolver*'s cover.

Four years later and they finally are.

They're also bigger than ever. This year's NYC stop of the Grey Day Tour won't be in Coney Island. It'll be at fucking Madison Square Garden.

There better be charcuterie.

Brandon Geist
Editorial Director/Chief Content Officer

REVOLVER

PUBLISHER

Enrique Abeyta

EDITORIAL

EDITORIAL DIRECTOR/CHIEF CONTENT OFFICER
Brandon Geist

CONTENT DIRECTOR Brad Angle

MANAGING EDITOR Sammi Chichester

EDITOR Eli Enis

COPY EDITOR Kitty Taron

SOCIAL MEDIA MANAGER Azu Rodriguez

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

Gregory Adams, Steve Appleford, J. Bennett, Dan Epstein, Mia Hughes, Emma Madden and Jeff Terich

ART AND VIDEO

CREATIVE DIRECTOR Jimmy Hubbard

DESIGN DIRECTOR, PRINT Todd Weinberger

CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHERS

Steve Appleford, Romain Ballez, Gabe Becerra, Kate Biel, Grant Butler, Dillon Dreiling, Oscar Dziedziela, Alexis Gross, Paul Harries, Gobinder Jhitta, Aaron Jones, Jessica-Rose Lena, Jim Louvau, Rob Menzer, NYC Tintype/J Borucki, Oscar Rodriguez, Travis Shinn and Corey Taylor

BUSINESS AND SALES

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER Enrique Abeyta

CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER Edmund Sullivan

CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER James Welch

HEAD OF DIGITAL Alvaro Gomez

BRAND PARTNERSHIP DIRECTOR Chris Enriquez, contact: chris@revolvermag.com

HEAD OF MUSIC COMMERCE Tony Bruno

ECOMMERCE MANAGER Ryan Morano

MERCHANDISE PRODUCT MANAGER Matt Geyer

VINYL PRODUCT MANAGER Tyler Howell

REVOLVER (ISSN No: 1527-408x) USPS #025443 is published Quarterly (4 issues per year) by Project M Group LLC, 150 West 22nd St., New York, NY 10011. Periodicals Postage Paid at New York, NY and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Revolver, PO Box 3000, Denville, NJ 07834-3000.

Entire contents copyright 2023, Project M L.L.C. All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or in part is prohibited. Project M L.L.C. is not affiliated with the companies or products covered in Revolver. Reproduction on the Internet of the articles and pictures in this magazine is illegal without the prior written consent of Revolver. Products named in the pages of Revolver are trademarks of their respective companies. PRODUCED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA. SUBSCRIBER CUSTOMER SERVICE: Revolver, PO Box 3000, Denville, NJ 07834-3000. Online: https://www.ezsubscription.com/rvl/mysubscription. Phone: 1-800-266-3312. Email: custsvc_revolver@fulcoinc.com.

MAYA GEIST

CANNIBAL CORPSE

OUT SEPTEMBER 22, 2023

Written shortly after the conclusion of the Violence Unimagined sessions (due to the pandemic keeping them off tour), echoes of that album exist in Chaos Horrific, but this is a whole new beast of its own. "To me this album feels sort of like a continuation of Violence Unimagined. The style is quite similar, but individually none of the songs on Chaos Horrific sound like songs on Violence Unimagined," says bassist Alex Webster. "It's a full-on death metal album, Cannibal Corpse style."

CHAOS HORRIFIC

2023 NORTH AMERICAN TOUR

SEP-22 NASHVILLE, TN - MARATHON MUSIC HALL
SEP-23 CHARLOTTE, NC - THE FILLMORE
SEP-24 KNOXVILLE, TN - THE MILL & MINE
SEP-26 PITTSBURGH, PA - STAGE AE
SEP-27 TORONTO, ON - REBEL
SEP-28 MONTREAL, QC - L'OLYMPIA
SEP-29 WORCESTER, MA - THE PALLADIUM
SEP-30 BROOKLYN, NY - BROOKLYN STEEL
OCT-02 DETROIT, MI - THE ROYAL OAK
OCT-03 GARY, IN - HARD ROCK LIVE
OCT-04 MINNEAPOLIS, MN - THE FILLMORE
OCT-06 DENVER, CO - MISSION BALLROOM
OCT-07 SALT LAKE CITY, UT - THE DEPOT
OCT-09 TACOMA, WA - TEMPLE THEATRE
OCT-10 SPOKANE, WA - KNITTING FACTORY
OCT-11 BOISE, ID - KNITTING FACTORY
OCT-13 SAN FRANCISCO, CA - THE WARFIELD
OCT-14 SAN DIEGO, CA - SOMA
OCT-17 SAN ANTONIO, TX - THE AZTEC THEATRE
OCT-18 DALLAS, TX - THE FACTORY
OCT-20 ATLANTA, GA - THE EASTERN
OCT-21 LOUISVILLE, KY - PARISTOWN HALL

CANNIBAL CORPSE

METALBLADE.COM/CANNIBALCORPSE

@METALBLADERECORDS

METAL BLADE RECORDS

FOR WHOLESALE INQUIRIES: ***WWW.METALBLADE.COM/WHOLESALEUS***

Splat®
Rebellious Colors

MIDNIGHTS. EXPRESS YOURSELF IN ANY SHADE.

Semi-Permanent
Bold Hair Color

Bold. Vivid. Long Lasting.
NO BLEACH NEEDED
Try on your MIDNIGHT shade!

NO MIX
READY TO USE
COLOR

EASY
APPLICATION

CONDITIONING
FORMULA

Amber | Magenta | Scarlet | Amethyst | Indigo | Jasper | Ruby | Jade | Tanzanite | Azure | Claret

Vegan - Cruelty Free

Available at: SplatHairColor.com CVS Walgreens RITE AID

UPRISING

Twin Temple, 2023

ARTISTS YOU NEED TO KNOW NOW

TRAVIS SHINN

01

Twin Temple, (from left) Zachary and Alexandra James

Twin Temple

Faced with Bible-bashers and death threats, the Satanic doo-wop duo double down with their most blasphemous record yet

"IT'S SAFE TO SAY WE'VE TURNED EVEN FURTHER AWAY FROM THE LIGHT, AND our souls are as damned as ever."

Twin Temple vocalist Alexandra James is explaining her and husband/guitarist Zachary James' steadfast devotion to the devil. Given the hatred the self-proclaimed Satanic doo-wop duo has experienced at the hands of a hardline Christian community since forming the band in 2016, can you blame them?

When detractors first targeted Twin Temple a few years ago, zealots started sending stacks of Bibles to their Los Angeles doorstep — perhaps as a warning, or maybe in the misguided hope of "rescuing" the James' souls from eternal hellfire. Less obtusely, Alexandra explains that death threats routinely started coming their way through email and over social media; she adds that online extremists discussed mobilizing at their concerts, armed. This is all to say that rock & roll is still a dangerous game, at least when you're Twin Temple.

"Since we started, we've received a lot of relentless moralizing, attempts to save our souls, religious fervor and backlash — even people questioning our sincerity, as far as if we're really who we say we are [as Satanists]," Alexandra explains of the extreme reactions their music has provoked. "As a kid, growing up seeing my heroes really challenge the status quo, I always thought, That's so cool, these pioneers of rock & roll are laying their lives down on the line for this. When we experienced it,

TEXT Gregory Adams
PHOTOGRAPHY Travis Shinn

I AM

God Is Dead, 2023; *Twin Temple (Bring You Their Signature Sound.... Satanic Doo-Wop)*, 2019

it definitely gave me a whole new perspective."

What's sure is early Twin Temple songs like "Lucifer, My Love" and "I Know How to Hex You" — between their lush, orchestral pop presentations and devilish wordplay — have struck a chord across musical and ideological spectrums, for better or for worse. While clearly playing well for folks that vibe with early '60s R&B and the golden age of rock & roll, Twin Temple's love for the dark arts has also made converts out of heavy-metal fanatics — as well as earned them endorsements from famous appreciators of the occult, including Glenn Danzig and Ghost. On the other side of things, haters are literally looking to hurt the band over their beliefs. While some would shrink in the face of such violent, virulent adversity, Christian condemnation has only strengthened Twin Temple's resolve.

"We just wanted to make the most brutally blasphemous record that we could," Alexandra says in relation to the group's scintillating, and obviously sacrilegious, sophomore full-length, *God Is Dead*. "We definitely wanted to up the blasphemy, and give some of the best black-metal records a run for the money, in terms of the themes."

True to their word, *God Is Dead* doubles down on Twin Temple's established anti-Christian aesthetic. Its album cover finds the couple locking eyes like lovers do — blood dripping out their mouths — as they hover over a burning church. Above some of the sweetest throwback soul sounds imaginable, Alexandra sings of torching scripture ("Burn Your Bible"), going down on demons ("Let's Have a Satanic Orgy") and just generally being "the baddest witch on the block" ("Spellbreaker"); while *God Is Dead*'s title track is likely the most joyous ode to deicide you'll hear this year.

That's the thing with Twin Temple: They're fun as hell. Despite the hate they've faced, they're still reveling in their love of Lucifer, and each other. Alexandra notes the band wanted *God Is Dead* to take a stronger romantic tack than 2019's *Twin Temple (Bring You Their Signature Sound.... Satanic Doo-Wop)*. That's clearly the case with "Two Sinners," a cursed bop about happily heading straight to hell with your betrothed. "Doesn't everyone want someone who makes them more depraved than they were before," Alexandra poses, rhetorically. "I think it's really romantic to break holy laws with someone, [or to] be nailed to a single cross. Like, I want to be buried in the same grave as Zach. So, I was just writing a love song about that."

Both Zachary and Alexandra spent time in the California punk scene before linking up, but they're scant on the details of how they met — at least the 21st century incarnations of themselves. Whether playing up the camp or protecting themselves post-doxxing, they do suggest an introduction was made several past lives ago, all the way back in 1666. As if part of a finely honed vaudeville routine, Alexandra starts up that she was "burned on the cross" next to Zachary. "I was a witchfinder, actually," the guitarist clarifies, as Alexandra shoots back: "I thought you were the woman [being burned] next to me!"

This kind of gallows humor goes a long way to understanding Twin Temple. Sonically, their sound reveals a great reverence for the trailblazers of pop and rock & roll, Alexandra's brimstone-smoky vibrato reverberating against a Wall of Sound-style aesthetic. The band's lively, blood-spilling, ritual dagger-wielding stage show harkens back to the days of Fifties shock-rock pioneer Screamin' Jay Hawkins. Naturally, it's made them thick as thieves with the horns-raising metal community — leading to tours with Ghost, Danzig and others. It's all part of the same rock & roll continuum, Zachary argues, with Twin Temple perhaps acting as a bridge between the subversiveness of Little Richard and extreme-metal vanguards like recent tourmates Behemoth — whose vocalist, Adam Nergal Darski, is also no stranger to offending the church.

"We didn't make [our music] for anyone other than ourselves, from day one, and we continue to do that," Zachary says. "It just happens that, philosophically, the blasphemy resonates with a lot of metal fans. And obviously the visuals resonate because we're all lovers of horror."

The culture jam continues with *God Is Dead*, a release that includes the Latin-grooved "Let's Have a Satanic Orgy," a song the band had also recorded in Spanish as "Tengamos la Orgía Satánica." Both versions report on a sex party taking place at the Witches' Sabbath, full-moon revelers grinding it out near a "magick circle." Rhythmically, it's a standout number in the Twin Temple catalog; playfully, it caps with a chant of "666," rather than a traditional "cha cha cha." *God Is Dead*'s tour cycle will find the James' debuting new stage attire inspired by the song: baby pink finery embroidered with carnal scenes of demons and succubi getting it on. Like the single, Alexandra says the stage wear was inspired by "some of the better orgies we've been to in recent memory" — while also paying homage to country great Hank Williams' ornate nudie suits, and the pastel color palette of Hollywood starlet Jayne Mansfield's Pink Palace mansion.

But before all that, Twin Temple tell *Revolver* they have to take care of some business back at home. While wrapping up the call, Alexandra reports that the rest of their afternoon will include blood sacrifices and an exorcising session. "There's a grave I meant to tell you about that looks real ripe for digging," she says to Zachary. Without missing a beat, her partner in holy crime deadpans of the day's proposed desecration, "Just the usual."

LISTEN TO NAPALM'S LATEST RELEASES NOW: OPEN SPOTIFY, SEARCH AND SCAN!

Find the power within you! Follow acclaimed vocalist Lena Scissorhands (Infected Rain) into a dark world of heavy metal intrigue and get initiated into the DEATH DEALER UNION!

OUT 9/22 CD | VINYL | DIGITAL | LIMITED EDITIONS
AVAILABLE EXCLUSIVELY VIA NAPALMRECORDSAMERICA.COM

ARTIFEX

A disturbingly sinister BLACK METAL masterpiece!

OUT 9/15 CD | VINYL | DIGITAL | LIMITED EDITIONS
AVAILABLE EXCLUSIVELY VIA NAPALMRECORDSAMERICA.COM

NERVOSA

A new era of THRASH METAL!

JAILBREAK

OUT 9/29 CD | VINYL | DIGITAL | LIMITED EDITIONS
AVAILABLE EXCLUSIVELY VIA NAPALMRECORDSAMERICA.COM

/NAPALMRECORDS
/NAPALMRECORDS
/NAPALMRECORDSOFFICIAL
/NAPALMRECORDS

visit our online store with music and merch
NAPALMRECORDSAMERICA.COM

NAPALM RECORDS

02

"Death has been a part of my life from even before I can remember. But when I was working on this album, it was just constant."
— Nate Garrett

Spirit Adrift, Saint Vitus Bar, Brooklyn, New York, 2022

Spirit Adrift

The trad-metal champions have endured lockdowns, deaths and paralyzing pain. Now they're "grabbing life by the horns in a post-pandemic world."

TEXT J. Bennett
PHOTOGRAPHY Rob Menzer

NATE GARRETT FEELS ALRIGHT TODAY. THIS IS A positive development. He and his trad-metal band, Spirit Adrift, have just returned from a festival run in the U.K. and Europe. Before that, they did a three-week tour through the South and Midwest with Cleveland speed kings Midnight. Before that, Garrett couldn't feel his legs.

"It was pretty scary," he tells *Revolver*. "It had me questioning my whole future because I was borderline paralyzed from the waist down. It felt like when your foot falls asleep and starts to come back, like pins and needles, but it was both of my legs, all the way down to my feet, and it was radiating constantly. It was insane, dude. I've never felt anything like it."

The problem was with the L5-S1 disc in his lower back. It was slipping out of place. It's a fairly common malady, but that doesn't make it any less terrifying. "I did all these hip-mobility exercises, got on medication and hit the inversion table as much as I could," he says. "The day the Midnight tour started, I was like, 'OK, I can do this.' I got through that tour and the festivals overseas. I've been doing my physical therapy, and it's been helping."

It's another in a long line of adversities that the guitarist and vocalist has endured. He spent much of his twenties in the throes of alcoholism (he's been in recovery for years). On March 1st, 2020, he and his wife moved from Arizona to Texas. Then the pandemic hit. "We're close to Austin, but it turns out we're not close enough to socialize with people during a pandemic," he says. "We were very isolated. She was working a lot, so I was pretty much home by myself with a couple of new puppies. Our dog had just died in January, which was a really tough experience. There was a lot of death."

This is another thing that Garrett has too much experience with. "My mother passed when I was four months old, so death has been a part of my life from

(from first column) *Ghost at the Gallows*, 2023; *Enlightened in Eternity*, 2020; *Divided by Darkness*, 2019; *Curse of Conception*, 2017; *Chained to Oblivion*, 2016

even before I can remember," he says. "But from 2020 to 2022, when I was working on this album, it was just constant — a lot of family, friends and pets dying." That album is *Ghost at the Gallows*. It's Spirit Adrift's fifth full-length, an impressive number considering that Garrett founded the band in 2015. It's also a triumph of traditional heavy metal — though the record's exultant chords and sparkling guitar harmonies on "Give Her to the River," "Death Won't Stop Me" and the major-key Ozzy-isms of "I Shall Return" belie their stressful origins.

"When lockdown happened, I was spinning out just like everybody else," Garrett says. "I'm at war with my own anxiety every day anyway, so I had to be extra disciplined. But I realized a few days in, 'Hey, dummy — what have you always done to improve your mental and emotional health? You write music. So, write music.'"

Garrett estimates that he wrote 20 to 30 songs between March and December of 2020. Three of these ended up on Spirit Adrift's 2021 EP, *Forge Your Future*. Eight comprise *Ghost at the Gallows*. His tried-and-true process of musical medicine had worked. "What Spirit Adrift did for me in the beginning was give me an outlet to process a lot of really new and difficult feelings," he says. "I'm in recovery, but I've never done therapy. When I was growing up, Jimi Hendrix was my therapy. Black Sabbath was my therapy. Phil Anselmo was my motivational coach. So, it's always just been music."

He channeled his frustration with the country's political divisions into the ripping, appropriately titled single "Barn Burner." "There're people who own everything and have had absolute power and wealth for generations upon generations, and they don't want the peons like us to have any of it," he says. "So, they make us argue about stuff that has to do with the amount of melanin in our skin or who you wanna love or who you wanna get married to or what you wanna do with your body. They have us constantly arguing about bullshit so they don't have to worry about us seeing what's really going on. I've written quite a few songs about that, and 'Barn Burner' is one of them."

Elsewhere, "I Shall Return" explores the possibility of reincarnation. "We never truly die," Garrett ventures. "The universe recycles our matter and energy in an infinite cycle. On a long enough timeline, maybe we do return." He says the song "Hanged Man's Revenge" is a call to arms, "urging the listener to rise up and grab life by the horns in a post-pandemic world of reinvigorated possibilities."

It's this type of cyclical recognition — and *carpe diem* attitude — that informs Garrett's approach toward his music. "I owe a debt of gratitude to Spirit Adrift, as an entity," he says. "Spirit Adrift is me — it started as a solo thing, but as it became a live band and a touring band, I began to look at it as its own entity. I work for it, and it works for me."

03

Dying Wish, (from left) Jon Mackey, Jeff Yambra, Emma Boster, Pedro Carrillo and Sam Reynolds

TEXT Emma Madden
PHOTOGRAPHY Gabe Becerra

Dying Wish

Portland's metalcore stalwarts go global with a call to arms for the survival of humankind

EMMA BOSTER NEVER SAW HERSELF FRONTING ONE of the most exciting acts in metalcore. Instead, she dreamed of winning *American Idol*. As a kid, she'd line up her stuffed animals in front of her karaoke player, close her eyes and feel herself in front of the garish stage lights. She'd sing Avril Lavigne to her plushy audience before deciding on her audition song: the Beatles' "Let It Be."

Boster never did get to that audition. It's a blessed turn of fate for the metal community. Today, the singer fronts Dying Wish — the Portland, Oregon, rising stars that have become our present-day answer to the deluge of great metalcore bands we were treated to in the Aughts. Boster and her band are reinvigorating the genre with a politically conscious animus, while touring with heavyweights including Limp Bizkit, Hatebreed and Motionless in White. Their stellar 2021 debut album, *Fragments of a Bitter Memory*, which featured a guest spot from Bryan Garris of scene leaders Knocked Loose, earned them nominations for "Best International Band" at the U.K.'s Heavy Music Awards, while this magazine has described them, on numerous occasions, as one of the best bands out there right now. This year, they release their follow-up: the skin-melting, brain-expanding *Symptoms of Survival*. Dying Wish have already risen far higher than any of its members ever anticipated, but they're playing it cool, taking a leaf out of the Beatles' book. They're letting it be.

Boster threw her *American Idol* dreams aside and began blazing her own trail in 2011, at the age of 15, when she attended her first DIY punk show at an anarchist bookstore in Portland. Besides Warped Tour headliners Paramore, Boster had never seen women playing anything on the heavier side of the sonic spectrum — but at that bookstore she was thrown into the deep end of diverse, delightfully belligerent music. She saw women screaming their lungs out, whipping up a frenzy among the mostly queer crowd, sweating, bleeding, becoming as feral as one could possibly be. The energy created in that dingy unairconditioned space — the size of Boster's living room, packed with 100 sweat-dripping individuals — was deeply transformative, almost spiritual. Her eyes were opened to a whole new world. Hardcore began to take over her life. "It was a vibe that I never felt before," says Boster. "I felt that I had found my purpose and my true self in that room."

Alongside a friend she'd met on Myspace named Brian, who introduced her to the likes of Have Heart, Comeback Kid and Down to Nothing, she began regularly taking the half-hour-long journey from her suburban Oregon City home to that Portland bookstore. Boster quickly mixed in with the local scene, absorbing all she could from her hardcore elders. She'd return to the suburbs and share everything she'd learned with former middle school friends and current bandmates Jeff Yambra (drums) and Pedro Carrillo (guitars). Back in the bookstore, there was an understanding among the tight-knit crowd: Everyone there was a reject from modern society; hardcore was a way to create their own alternative community, an antithesis to the world outside.

It was the first time Boster felt like she fit in anywhere. She'd spent much of her youth moving around, transferring schools. In small-town Oregon, between the rednecks and suburbanites, she hardly found anyone to call a friend. She developed a steely demeanor, cultivating a defense mechanism between her and

"One symptom of survival is the planet warming — and all the anxiety, depression and regret that comes with that. The world is just fucked up."
— Emma Boster

everyone else. She began teasing her hair, intensifying her eyeliner — a visual expression that she wasn't like everyone else. She was bullied, mostly by young men. She began to bully back. It's a kind of vengeance that's carried over into her own music, her screams a form of vigilantism sonically punishing everyone who's ever wronged her.

Boster was 21 when she first formed her own band, desperate to scream her heart out. While they played small bars across Portland, she also began booking shows for other bands and soon found her own voice within the scene. She believed desperately in her local scene and its power to confront and upend much of the conservatism and racism that had plagued the majority white Beaver state. When she formed Dying Wish several years later, she expected only to remain in her hometown and state. And then, out of nowhere, the group exploded. "We were just this shitty little punk band, now look where we are," says Boster with amazement.

Dying Wish's 2021 debut *Fragments of a Bitter Memory* combined the political and the personal. Screeds against neo-colonialism and police brutality — which were directly inspired by the band's involvement in the 2020 George Floyd protests in Portland — were sandwiched between anthems about Boster's experiences as a survivor of childhood trauma. With its 2000s metalcore, Killswitch Engage-inspired sound and forward-thinking flourishes, it quickly evidenced Dying Wish as one of metalcore's most promising prospects.

Boster wrote much of that album during the earliest days of the pandemic, when lockdown forced her into deep self-reflection and introspection. It was a state that inspired the album's standout cut, the title track. Over a melodeath soundscape, Boster walks us back to her first memory, when she was a flower girl at her mother's wedding, watching as she was about to marry the man who would spend "the next decade verbally and physically abusing her." "I would bury you if I could," Boster screams at the track's climax.

"Screaming that over and over again has really helped with the healing process," says Boster. "Having people relate to it and talking about these things openly … was really liberating for me. It helped me toward the acceptance stage of my trauma."

While Boster describes Dying Wish's debut as a "trauma dump," the band's second album finds them enjoying a new sense of confidence and maturity. *Symptoms of Survival* looks outward to the world, towards the nature of war and destruction itself. "Symptoms of survival, I will take your life or you'll take mine," Boster chants on the title track, a song about the victims of America's mass war machine. "Another symptom of survival [is] the planet warming at an excessive rate — and all the anxiety and depression and regret that comes with that. It's an issue beyond ourselves. The world is just fucked up."

The album also features the band's most personal tracks yet, several of which have thematic through lines that connect to *Fragments of a Bitter Memory*. Boster reports that "Fragments" directly inspired the new "Path to Your Grave" (which borrows its title from a lyric in that 2021 track) as well as the ballad "Paved in Sorrow."

"I had these new feelings spark up about my younger sister," says Boster about the first time she heard the instrumental for "Paved in Sorrow." "She experienced a lot of neglect; I wrote 'Fragments' about her dad. And so 'Paved in Sorrow' was just kind of me saying, I'm sorry…"

Through their music, Dying Wish are relaying life's complexities — both through their own lived experiences and by drawing attention to the patterns of destruction inherent in humankind. Calling them "female-fronted" belittles and misunderstands their enormous group mission, a brandishing Boster's noticed the bigger her band has become. "There are a lot of really talented women playing music, but I want to see us all being mixed in together, and taken seriously within the metal music scene, and not just put into our own subcategory."

Dying Wish's music is something that unearths the most buried parts of ourselves, making us sit with it, face up to it, learn from it. It's as large as life, as sure as death. It's a miracle that Boster found hardcore, that she never did attend an *American Idol* audition. Ⓡ

Symptoms of Survival, 2023; *Fragments of a Bitter Memory*, 2021

MYRKVR

SPINE

The highly anticipated new album sees MYRKUR *at the forefront of Scandinavian soundscapes and metal once again!*

OCTOBER 20
ON LP/CD/CS/DIGITAL

DYING FETUS
Make Them Beg for Death

DEATH METAL TITANS DYING FETUS RETURN WITH THEIR HIGHLY ANTICIPATED NEW ALBUM

OUT NOW ON LP/CD/DLX CD/CS/DIGITAL

INCANTATION
UNHOLY DEIFICATION

The highly anticipated new album from Death Metal icons INCANTATION!

OUT NOW ON LP/CD/CS/DIGITAL

CRYPT OF ANCESTRAL KNOWLEDGE

American Black Metal overlords WOLVES IN THE THRONE ROOM *return with a new EP, featuring four new tracks of cinematic black metal and dark acoustic folk!*

SEPTEMBER 29
ON VINYL/CD/CS/DIGITAL

SEE THEM ON TOUR NOW!

FINAL GASP
MOURNING MOON

An unholy union of evil Death Rock influenced punk & hardcore!

SEPTEMBER 22
ON LP/CD/CS/DIGITAL

The Keening
LITTLE BIRD

The debut album from THE KEENING, *the new band featuring Rebecca Vernon of SubRosa!*

OCTOBER 6
ON 2XLP/CD/CS/DIGITAL

RELAPSE RECORDS

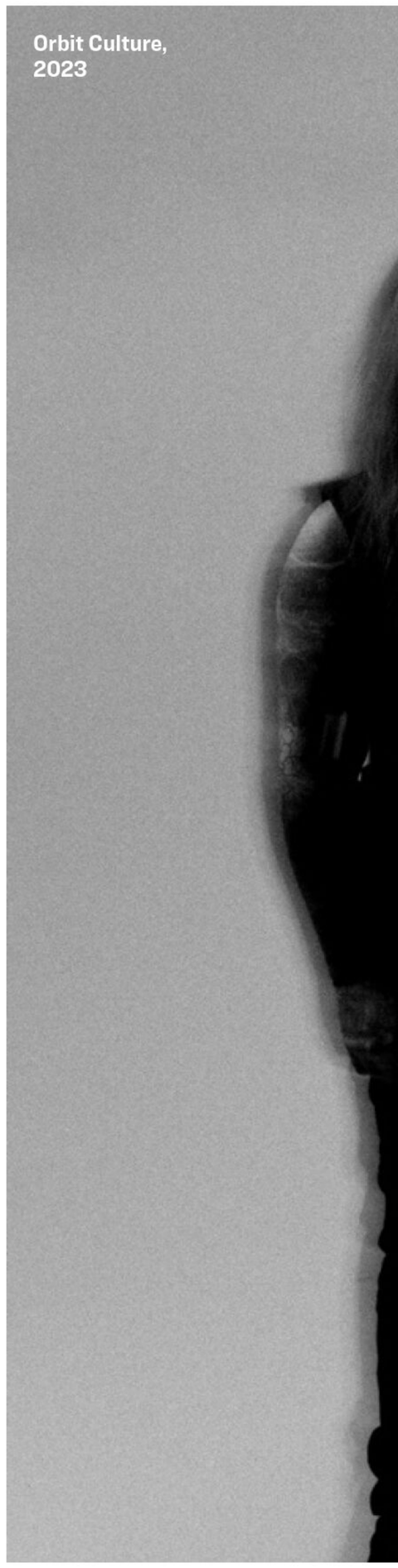
WWW.RELAPSE.COM

04

Orbit Culture

The In Flames-approved upstarts explore the "highest mountain, lowest abyss" on their most extreme outing yet

(clockwise from top left) *Descent*, 2023; *Nija* 2020; *Rasen*, 2016; *In Medias Res*, 2014



Orbit Culture, 2023

ORBIT CULTURE HAVE JUST PLAYED THE BIGGEST show of their lives — and bandleader Niklas Karlsson is still trying to wrap his head around it.

On June 15th, shortly after kicking off their 2023 European tour, Sweden's rising melodeath stars plugged in for an afternoon performance at the massive Graspop Heavy Metal Meeting in Belgium. With an estimated festival-wide audience of 150,000 and a lineup that saw the group playing alongside heavy metal icons — including Guns N' Roses, Ghost, Pantera and At the Gates — it was the kind of experience that singer-guitarist Karlsson, 29, had been dreaming about ever since he started the band a decade ago in the small town of Eksjö, Sweden. The crowd that gathered before them was going wild — and Orbit Culture stepped up and took full advantage of the moment.

"We're here to stay," says Karlsson, reflecting on that pivotal show a few days later from a hotel room in Spain. "*That's* the statement a show like that makes."

"Before [Graspop], our friend went out to the crowd to take a photo and said, 'Dudes, this is the biggest thing you ever did,'" adds guitarist Richard Hansson, 32, while sharing a round of beers with his bandmates. "It was fucking packed with people. I was stoked because it's like now we can *really* prove ourselves."

Orbit Culture have traveled a great distance, both figuratively and literally, to get to this place in their career. Karlsson's work ethic and musical vision — the latter which sees the songwriter processing personal trauma and addressing topics like self-harm through a style of death metal that nods to early Gojira, Lamb of God and Meshuggah — has earned them a rapidly expanding fanbase, and a reputation as one of the most exciting new metal bands in Europe. Orbit Culture's aspirational spirit has driven them since their earliest days. As far back as their debut full-length, 2014's *In Medias Res*, Karlsson and his band have displayed an outsized sense of scope and ambition, even when working from humble DIY means. Their new and fourth album, *Descent*, is Orbit Culture's grandest and most climactic statement to date. The record reflects and amplifies the growing fervor surrounding the band, which has reached a fever pitch over the last year — thanks, in part, to the generosity of their Swedish death-metal forebears.

By Karlsson's estimation, Orbit Culture played 100 shows between June 2022 and June 2023, which is more than double the number of gigs they performed in the previous 12-month span. A major catalyst in that change was In Flames, who invited their young countrymen to open for their U.S. tour. "Somehow the In Flames crew saw we were playing the same [U.S.] festival and asked if we'd like to join the American run," says Karlsson. "And we were like, 'Fuck yeah!'" This cosign from the melodeath icons boosted Orbit Culture's cred — and the increased touring time also directly influenced the musical direction of *Descent*.

TEXT Jeff Terich
PHOTOGRAPHY Oscar Dziedziela

Karlsson says their goal for the new album, first and foremost, was to create the kind of thrilling listening experience that would translate well in front of a festival audience. The process helped Orbit Culture craft an expansive set of songs that channels their diverse influences — Lamb of God's groove, Metallica's pop-friendly heaviness, even a subtle hint of late EDM icon Avicii's rhythmic pulse — while exploring an even greater range of extremes: from immense, punishing and raucous ("From the Inside") to melodic, anthemic and accessible ("Sorrower").

"We wanted it to be a live-friendly album, but in the end it turned out to be this big-ass darker monster," says Karlsson of the record's light-and-shade duality. "That's what we're pushing for: the highest mountain to the lowest abyss."

Fittingly, as Orbit Culture — which is rounded out by drummer Christopher Wallerstedt and bassist Fredrik Lennartsson — soar to greater musical heights, Karlsson's songwriting digs even deeper into his dark experiences and internal struggles with anxiety and harm OCD. Much like he did on 2020's *Nija*, he continues to work through feelings of isolation and depression on new songs "Black Mountain" and "From the Inside," while combining it with imagery from cinematic fantasy like director Denis Villeneuve's *Dune*. Karlsson's confessional songwriting serves as a form of therapy for the singer, and its compelling balance of escapism and uncomfortable truths is one of the aspects of Orbit Culture that most resonates with listeners.

"When I see fan comments [saying] they're going through something dark, I know I have those thoughts, too, sometimes," Hansson adds. "Knowing that they can relate to our music, that's fucking fantastic. If our music can help people, that's good enough for us."

"We have the kind of band where we're all in this together," says Karlsson. "But when those guys aren't around, music keeps me sane."

Karlsson and his bandmates are clearly unafraid to acknowledge the darkness of the human condition. But as the horizon continues to unfold on the busiest phase of their career, they also see brighter skies ahead of them, and are content to enjoy the moment. After all, says Karlsson, "We're having the fucking time of our lives."

05

Sunami

Sunami,
Los Angeles,
2023

TEXT Eli Enis
PHOTOGRAPHY Oscar Rodriguez

How the Bay Area's reigning shit-talkers went from joke band to hardcore leaders

"THERE'S TWO PEOPLE IN THIS WORLD: YOU'RE either from the Bay, or you're a bitch."

In the Sunami Style revolution, those words are effectively the shot heard 'round the world. Vocalist Josef Alfonso roared that knowingly absurd boast into the mic during his San Jose hardcore band's first-ever show in 2019, and the frenzy of comically violent batterings that followed — a crowd-killer wearing boxing gloves, several moshers in Halloween costumes and many shirtless dudes gleefully taking punches to the face — were captured on video that quickly went viral.

In a genre like hardcore where hype cycles turn over quickly, Sunami could've easily been a flash in the pan. Between the playfully illiterate misspelling of their moniker and lyrical mosh calls like, "Beat yo ass then steal yo bitch," the vibe has been decidedly unserious from the get-go — but their ignorantly heavy beatdown anthems have resonated deeply with a whole new generation of post-pandemic hardcore kids. Now, Sunami are beloved on hardcore TikTok, almost all their U.S. shows sell out, and whether you love their half-joking/half-serious attitude or find yourself scratching your head at their snowballing popularity, there's no denying that Sunami are currently in the upper echelon of bands dominating the hardcore zeitgeist.

Amazingly, the band have achieved all their success without a manager or a booking agent, and they rose to the forefront of the international scene before they even released their self-titled debut album, which surprise-dropped in June 2023 via the hardcore powerhouse Triple B Records.

"I used to consider us a joke band, but I don't know, man," Alfonso muses, his soft-spoken voice and introverted personality a hilarious contrast to the belligerent shit-talker he portrays onstage. "I guess the proper term is just: We're having fun."

The 30-year-old Alfonso is a Bay Area native who started going to shows at 12 and was playing in bands by 16. Although many people suspect he's actually dealt out the hard-knock ass-beatings he screams about, he calmly denies that assumption, saying that "being an aggressive or violent guy is just not really my thing." Even so, he "didn't live in the greatest area" growing up and was subjected to an environment where the streets could be dangerous. For him, hardcore offered a more positive path.

"It definitely was an escape for me," Alfonso says. "At the time, I grew up with my single-parent mom. That was my home life. I was an introverted kid — I'm still an introverted guy — but hardcore was just a cool way for me to express myself."

When Alfonso phones *Revolver*, it's a couple days after Sunami played Manchester, England's Outbreak Fest to over 5,000 hard-moshing maniacs. "It was the most amount of people I've played to," says Alfonso, who came up playing "shot-ass shows" in the Bay Area with the half-dozen local bands he was in before Sunami unexpectedly broke big. While Sunami and their neighbors in Drain, Gulch and Scowl have made the Bay Area a supreme hardcore destination in recent years, before as recently as 2018, it wasn't anything close to a hotbed.

05

"I used to consider us a joke band, but I don't know, man. I guess the proper term is just: We're having fun."
— Josef Alfonso

"As long as I can remember, shows in my area have, in terms of attendance, never been that great," Alfonso recalls. "I felt like the Bay and San Jose in general has just been overlooked, especially with the awesome scene that L.A. has just six hours away."

Once Gulch and Hands of God (the latter a now-defunct heavy hardcore band that three members of Sunami played in) started gaining traction in the late 2010s, new audiences started coming out and a thriving scene emerged. Sunami formed right as it was cresting, releasing their demo in August 2019, and playing their now-iconic first show that October. Back then, they had no intentions to take the band beyond their home turf.

"We just released a demo and only planned on playing a couple of local shows," Alfonso explains. "But then the pandemic happened and for whatever reason … the demo just blew up, and we just got a crazy amount of hype."

When live shows returned, Sunami's internet popularity materialized into bonkers live shows, and the crowd sizes have since ballooned to a scale that Alfonso finds staggering. In spring 2023, Sunami self-booked their first full North American tour, and all 28 dates were entirely sold out — a true DIY triumph and a nearly unprecedented statistic in the world of hardcore.

"It's crazy because we played some venues that I never thought I'd be able to play, let alone sell out," Alfonso says with disbelief. "We played the upstairs of the Nile in Arizona, which is crazy because I've been on tour with Power Trip in their prime, and they played the little room of that venue, and I don't even think *that* was sold out."

Even with all of this wind in their sails, Sunami are continuing to take every move one step at a time. Part of the reason why they independently booked their first proper tour was because they weren't sure if the band would even exist by the time it ended.

"After a full U.S. tour, who knows," Alfonso recalls of the uncertainty going into those live dates. "The vibes of the band might have been different. But it's not. We're chilling."

They've taken a similar approach with their recorded output, trickling out EPs (including a 2021 split with Gulch) because they've noticed a demand for more music, not because they were actively trying to kick-start a career. Their refreshingly lackadaisical ethos might be why it took so long for them to finally drop their first full-length album.

"We really dragged our feet in the ground in terms of writing it, but we knew it was going to happen," says Alfonso. He laughs. "We are such *not* serious people. We literally wrote it in two weeks, just right before we recorded."

Alfonso's self-effacing comments aside, the immediacy and zeal of those sessions resulted in a crushing eight-song debut that boasts some of Sunami's heaviest cuts yet, including standouts "Y.S.A.B.," "Dirty Work" and "Think About It."

Sunami find themselves, inadvertently, entrenched in one of the hottest scenes in the world right now, at a time when hardcore is promising more career stability than ever before. They also find themselves at the crossroads where their peer bands have either leveled up — or broken up.

Gulch were one of hardcore's most celebrated rising bands in the lead-up to the pandemic and played some of the craziest shows when live music returned. Regardless, they called it quits in 2022 at the apex of their popularity. Conversely, Sunami's San Jose pals in Drain (fronted by Gulch drummer Sammy Ciaramitaro) signed to Epitaph Records and have become a full-time touring machine, perhaps already surpassing the popularity of Gulch.

"It's just a weird time for hardcore in general, because the bands are getting huge," says Alfonso. "I don't really know how to navigate that, but it's been cool."

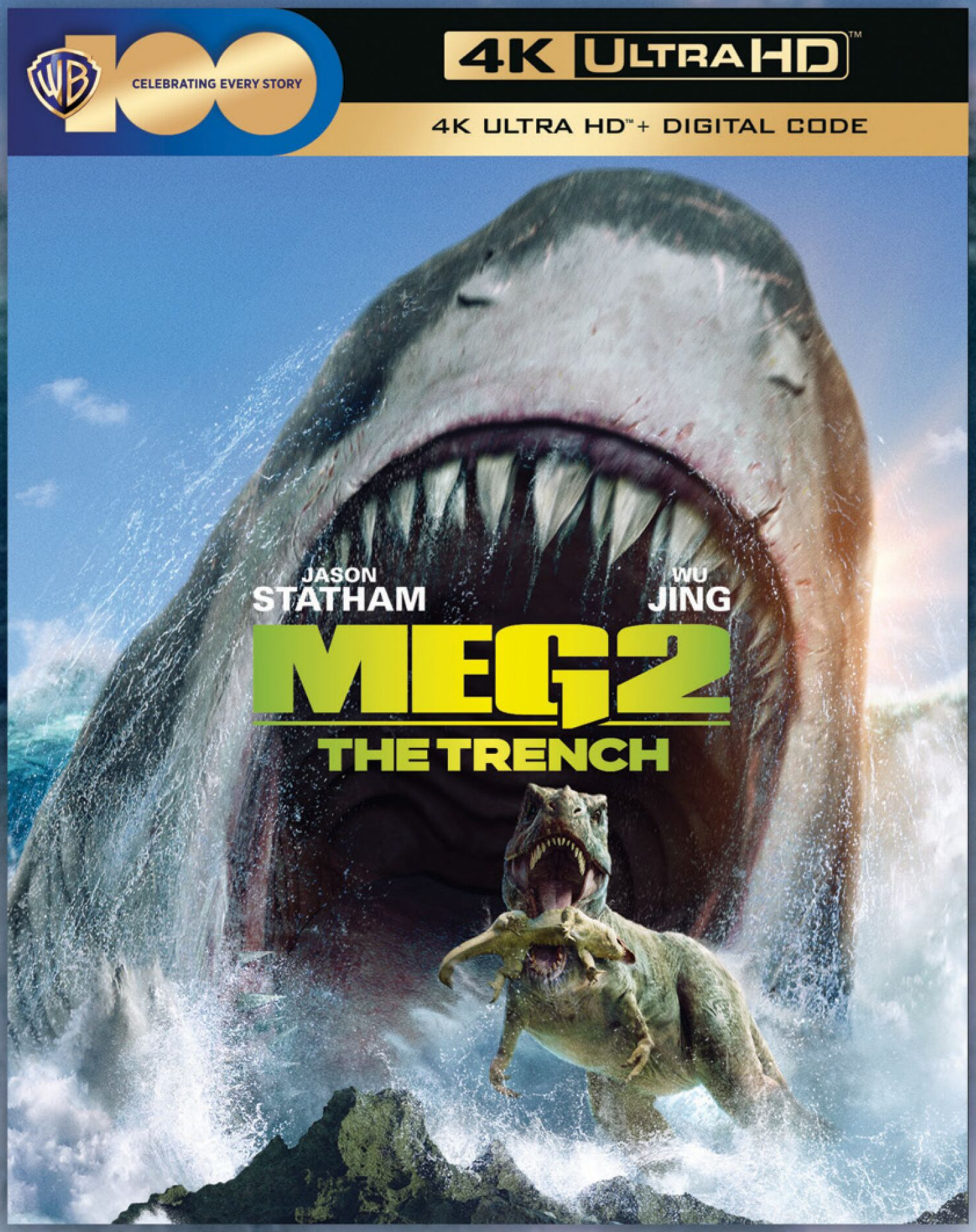
True to form, Alfonso is just riding the wave and seemingly impartial to whichever way the current takes Sunami.

"We have plans until next year, but if no one hits us up to do shows later, then that's it," he says with a shrug. "I'll still play music no matter what. I'm in a bunch of other different current bands, so I still got things to do."

Besides, he's already crossed off every bucket-list item for Sunami — and then some. "I've done more than I would've ever wanted," says Alfonso. "If it stops tomorrow, then it stops tomorrow. I'm just having fun." Ⓡ

Sunami, 2023; *Sunami/Gulch* split EP, 2021; *Demonstration* demo, 2019

BACK FOR SECONDS



LOOK FOR IT ON 4K ULTRA HD™ AND DIGITAL

PARENTS STRONGLY CAUTIONED
PG-13
ACTION/VIOLENCE, SOME BLOODY IMAGES, LANGUAGE AND BRIEF SUGGESTIVE MATERIAL
Some Material May Be Inappropriate for Children Under 13

4K ULTRA HD™ Blu-ray Disc™ ENGLISH SDH Dolby VISION·ATMOS

Special features not rated and may not be Hi-Def or SDH.
© 2023 Warner Bros. Entertainment Inc., Shanghai CMC Pictures Co., Ltd. and Gravity Pictures International Limited. All rights reserved.
WARNER BROS.

FORTUNE FAVOURS

THE BRAVE

HEADRUSH

FORTUNE FAVOURS THE BRAVE

WWW.HEADRUSH.COM

VANGUARD

$uicideboy$, 2023

REBELS, INNOVATORS AND ICONOCLASTS

DILLON DREILING

Founded with a suicide pact, the NOLA trap-metal duo has far outlived its own expectations. This is the story of how two cousins transcended their darkness to become an inspirational, stadium-filling phenomenon.

TEXT **Emma Madden**
PHOTOGRAPHY **Dillon Dreiling**

SUICID

STAFF
GBG
GBG
GBG
VEBOYS

"I never wanted to go back
to what I was doing before.
It was either this or die trying."
— $crim

RUBY DA CHERRY, ONE HALF OF THE CULTISH RAP DUO $uicideboy$, is ready to tell the public about his most intense fan experience. "Here goes," he says, his cheeks reddening. His story begins at his dad's restaurant in New Orleans, a building that's appeared in multiple $uicideboy$ videos — an important landmark in the $uicideboy$ pilgrimage. On any typical day, you're likely to find a crowd of typically obsessive $uicideboy$ devotees loitering around there. On this particular day, Ruby went straight to his dad's office in hopes of avoiding them. Stephanie, his father's secretary, brought one up anyway. She knocked at the door. Ruby rolled his eyes, braced himself. "Talking to fans can be so awkward," he explains. "They usually freak out and go silent, so you have to lead the conversation: 'Hey, man. How are you? What's your name? How old are you?'" "22," the shaking fan replied, nervously holding a bunch of $uicideboy$ CDs he'd brought with him on his drive from Oklahoma. "He told me he'd just broken up with his girlfriend," Ruby relays. "I told him not to worry about that shit; he was a young kid." The fan thanked Ruby, left his dad's restaurant, drove the long journey home.

That night, while half-mindedly flicking through his Instagram DMs, Ruby clicked on a message that caught his attention. It was from the fan's mother. She'd been messaging Ruby all day. "Help!" read the first one. "My son's driving all the way from Oklahoma. He just broke up with his girlfriend, and he's going to kill himself. He's going to your dad's restaurant for his final meal. If you see this, please talk to him. He really looks up to $uicideboy$."

"I was like, holy shit, good fucking job I talked to this kid," says Ruby. "That's when it hit me. I almost wasn't going to do it. I rolled my eyes and almost let my ego get the better of me."

Ruby received another message from the fan's mother later that night: "Oh my God, you met him! He's coming home!" It was a message that immediately moved him to tears.

A few months later, the musician received a final message. "It said, it said..." Ruby pauses, trying to get the words out. "I'm so sorry, he killed himself." As soon as these words leave his lips, Ruby begins to cry in front of me and his cousin and bandmate $crim, his face now bright red, his anguished wails unrestrained. "They put me on his funeral pamphlet, they thanked me."

SINCE EMERGING FROM THE SHADOWY UNDER-ground of the upside-down crosses, witch house-inspired internet of the mid-2010s, $uicideboy$ have retained one of the most fervent fanbases in modern music. Through their songs, they've reckoned with their own suicidal ideation and substance abuse head-on, inspiring a kind of ardent fandom that goes far beyond just sticking up posters on walls.

Their dark personal themes and raw, abrasive mix of shock rap, trap metal and punk appeals to a wide demographic, and has hooked hip-hop fans and headbangers alike. $uicideboy$ have long championed the leading lights of modern hardcore and have brought out Turnstile, Code Orange, Knocked Loose and Trash Talk on various tours. Their influence on heavy-music culture has been recognized by the masked gods of the genre, with Slipknot themselves tapping $uicideboy$ for a marquee spot at Knotfest Iowa 2021. The hype is real, and the audiences are only getting bigger. And at this point — after almost a decade as doyens of underground rap — Ruby and $crim have heard from thousands of young people that $uicideboy$ have helped save their lives. It happens so frequently that the pair say they started to grow numb to it. "When you hear it all the time that kind of loses its intensity," says $crim.

All of their accolades — launching their own successful label G*59 Records and inking a lucrative distribution deal with The Orchard; dropping three acclaimed studio albums (the most recent of which is 2022's *Sing Me a Lullaby, My Sweet Temptation*) and scores of EPs and mixtapes (including 2019's *Live Fast, Die Whenever*, which featured blink-182's Travis Barker and Korn's James "Munky" Shaffer); earning *billions* of streams (placing them among the 100 most streamed artists of all time) and multiple *Billboard* Top 200 hits; selling out venues across the globe with their famous Grey Day Tour — seemed to lose their luster, too.

Now, they're staring down the barrel of the greatest year of their lives: a sold-out tour with a supporting slot from Ghostemane, a stop at Madison Square Garden. Not to mention, the release of their best music yet: the fifth installment of their *I No Longer Fear the Razor Guarding My Heel* EP series — the pinnacle of the $uicideboy$ sound, with sweet flows and emotionally expansive subject matter meeting grungey off-tone beats. This time, they're finally letting themselves feel it. They can't fuck this up. They've come too far ... and the stakes are too high.

$uicideboy$, (from left) Ruby da Cherry and $crim

STAFF
G59
TOU

GROWING UP IN NEW ORLEANS AS PART OF A REL- atively small family, Scott Anthony Arceneaux Jr. ($crim) and Aristos Norman Petrou (Ruby) were always the closest of the cousins. As both their parents' firstborns, they were the family's future patriarchs. Together, they were highly competitive kids, shooting hoops until way past sundown. "He was what I would consider my first real friend," says $crim. "Yeah, I've never actually thought about that," adds Ruby, "you were my first friend, too."

Ruby's home was an enclave for $crim, a place to escape and sleep. "It's not hard to find out that I had a pretty rough upbringing." Both of their mothers were raised in poverty, surrounded by addiction and abuse. Ruby's mother continued to suffer with alcoholism throughout his youth, before later recovering. Still, the addiction had become a part of the family's bloodline, the depression hereditary. "Looking at the other kids and their families, nothing about it seemed normal," says Ruby, "but it was the only normal we ever knew."

The cousins began smoking at 13 and drinking at 14 — customary ages, they say, for many born and raised in NOLA. They stayed out late, neither of them knowing what they'd come home to. Ruby learned to adjust to the unpredictable environment at home by becoming a people-pleaser; he never felt that he fit in anywhere — so he learned to fit in everywhere. $crim never felt at ease in his own skin either. "My earliest memory from childhood was just never being able to feel comfortable," he says. He craved external validation as a way to quell the rage that burned inside of him. "I had a lot of angst and anger that I didn't really understand at the time because I had a lot of responsibilities at that age that I don't think any kid should have to live with." As a child, $crim was forced into a peacekeeping role. He became responsible for his brothers. He broke up fights between his parents. From the age of nine, $crim lived the life of an adult.

"I don't know if you relate to this, Scott," says Ruby, "but I hated myself for many years, and I found that kind of gave me the drive to do something with myself, because if I could succeed in something then maybe the love would come after."

"Exactly," replies $crim. "As a kid, I put this chip on my shoulder that I still have today: I'm not good enough. I'm not good enough for anyone."

While Ruby continued to feel socially adrift, $crim continued desperately searching for an identity. He found one in being a "punk ass." Being the bad kid made him feel as though he belonged to something. He was a class clown, a drug taker, a shit-talker. He rejected everything else, even as he searched for someone or something to save him from his punk-ass ways.

$crim found salvation in hip-hop. His uncle introduced him to Three 6 Mafia when he was eight, and

> "I hated myself for many years. That gave me the drive: If I could succeed then maybe the love would come after."
> — Ruby da Cherry

soon after he discovered New Orleans' hometown-hero labels Cash Money and No Limit. (These trailblazing indies would eventually directly inspire $uicideboy$ to start their own label collective, G*59.) Ruby, on the other hand, turned to punk and metal: Misfits, Leftöver Crack, Slayer. The cousins' paths began to divert. After violin lessons, and then cymbal-crashing in a marching band, Ruby acquired a full drum set of his own at 13 and began playing in emo, post-hardcore, punk and metal bands. He recently released a solo pop-punk album titled *tragic love songs to study to [vol. 5]* as a tribute to his musical upbringing.

Meanwhile, $crim acquired his sense of rhythm through competitive hip-hop dance. He tried applying it to a drum set that was purchased around the same time Ruby got his, though it didn't pan out. At 13, he turned to DJing instead, and spun decks all throughout high school. At the end of adolescence, he developed a deep interest in audio engineering and beat making. After a brief stint in school, $crim's path once again converged with Ruby's.

Punk and rap — the genres both cousins latched onto — have always complemented one another seamlessly. Both had roots in working-class New York City, and both primarily existed to articulate a gritty existence. But it wasn't until the late Eighties and early Nineties, with the emergence of the Beastie Boys, and Ice-T's hardcore side project Body Count, that they were really fused together. Punk was introduced to 808s while rap was introduced to mosh pits. Soon, Ruby and $crim would be uniting them once more.

Ruby, who graduated college in 2013, occasionally checked in with his cousin, but from a distance. At this point, $crim was making beats for musical oligarchs like Universal. Dissatisfied with the corporate grind, every now and again, he'd drop mixtapes of his own. Listening to them from the sidelines, Ruby became a fan of his cousin's work. A $600 video camera was the first purchase he made out of school, hoping to produce and edit visual footage to accompany $crim's beats. "Dude, I want to make music videos for you, I want to learn and practice," he told him. $crim was initially reluctant, though he soon relented.

In 2014, the cousins formed $uicideboy$, named after a suicide pact they'd made together — an origin story that is, by this point, signed into legend: If their music didn't take off, they'd both agree to kill themselves. Did that pact really happen? "Yes," they both reply in unison. "We'd take an overdose, take the easy way," says Ruby. "That was my last attempt at music. I'd been doing it for 10 years and I must have been in like 20 different bands. Scott was the first person I ever worked with that actually believed in me. $uicideboy$ was going to be my last attempt at trying to do something with music. And if it didn't work out, I was just gonna kick the bucket."

$crim, on the other hand, had already made a killing with music — but the knife was turning in on him. "I had made it up in my mind. I never wanted to go back to what I was doing before. It was either this or die trying."

As $uicideboy$, they uploaded their first track "kill yourself pt.1" onto SoundCloud soon after, in June 2014. Around that time, a scuzzy punk-meets-rap aesthetic had been germinating. A few years earlier, the L.A. rap collective Odd Future stepped onto the scene, branding themselves a "punk group." Soon, alongside $uicideboy$, a new breed of punk-inspired rappers would take over, including Denzel Curry and XXXTentacion — both of whom they toured with early on.

With their emo attitude and Southern-inspired trap and drill production, $uicideboy$ became pioneers of what was soon to be termed "SoundCloud Rap" — a genre that combined cloudy, abrasive beats, wide-ranging sample styles and dark opiate-driven lyrical themes. $uicideboy$ quickly earned fans in the emerging genre's major players; artists who were ultimately killed by their own subject matter, including a young Lil Peep, who died in 2017 of an accidental overdose, XXXTentacion, who was shot and killed in 2018 while being robbed, and Juice WRLD, who died in 2019 of an accidental overdose.

"It felt so surreal," Ruby recalls. "X died. Then a couple years later Juice WRLD died. We were very close to them. Unfortunately, we never got to make music with them like we wanted to."

"I got to know X really well when he came on tour with us," adds $crim. "We developed a really solid relationship and checked in with each other a lot. I cried myself to sleep the night I found out he passed."

After witnessing this series of deaths within the scene, the pair believed they were next. "I would use a lot of opiates with the thought of like, be careful," says Ruby of his growing substance use. "I always had

$uicideboy$, Coachella, Indio, California, 2023

MATT WINKELMEYER/GETTY IMAGES FOR COACHELLA

this thing in my head of how poetic… and you know, just romanticizing the shit," adds $crim of his own fantasies about dying young, "which I realize now is just total bullshit. It's tragic, is what it is."

$crim and Ruby both hit their bottoms some years later, just before the pandemic. $crim suffered a year-long narcotics-induced psychosis that isolated him from everyone in his life, including his bandmate and cousin. Deep into his psychosis, $crim began running low on drugs. "I had no plan on quitting," he says, looking back. "But I would say in that time, something divine happened. I had a deep moment of clarity." From that point onward, he took a vow to save himself. He stayed for nine months in California, strenuously working on himself, attending therapy and joining 12 Step programs. He got clean, and to this day, remains clean.

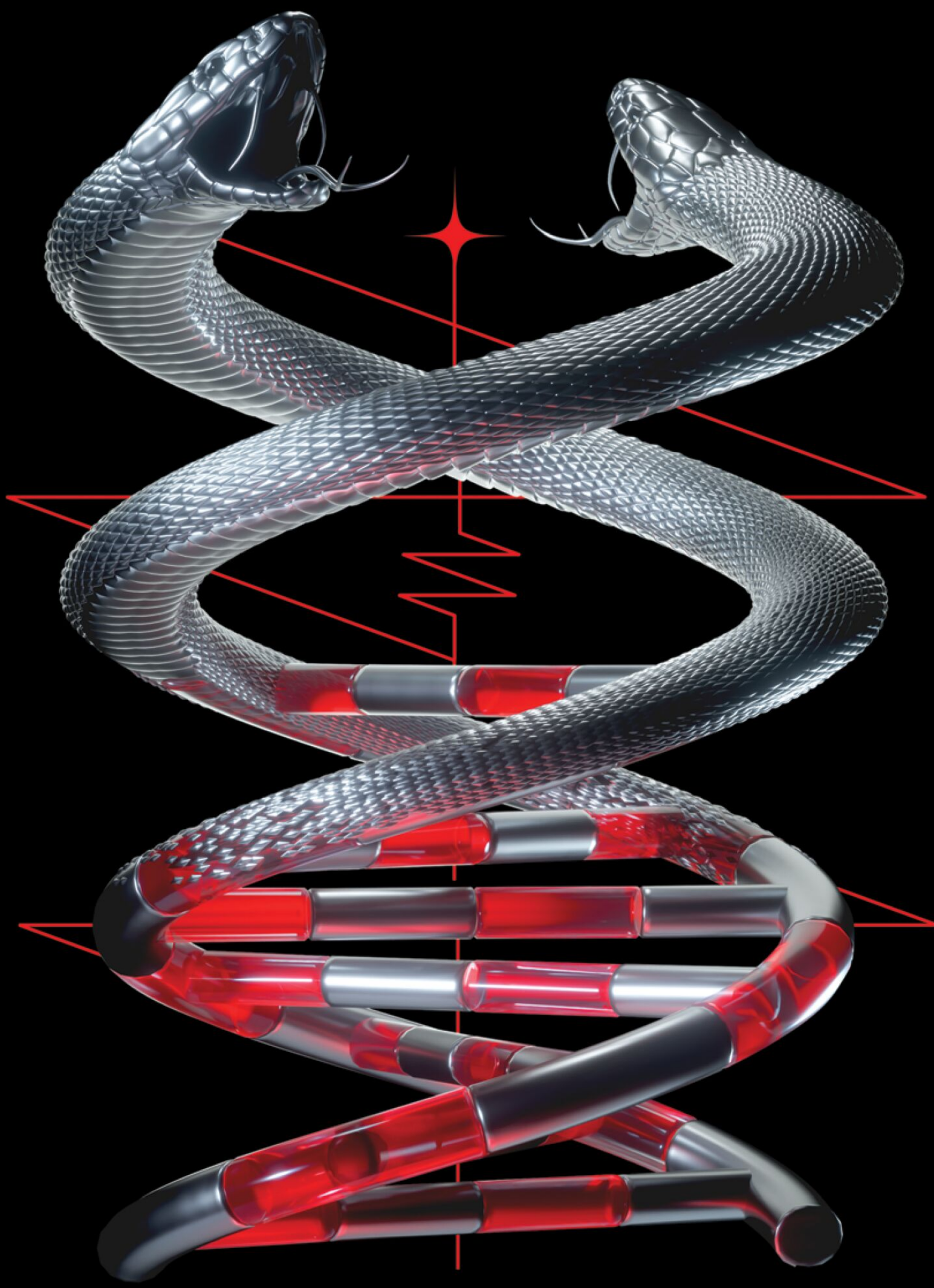
It was during $crim's time in California that Ruby began to enter his own darkest chapter. In the middle of that first year of the pandemic, October 2020, $uicideboy$ had been put on hold while $crim was out of action. Ruby met with their managers to plot what to do next. During that meeting, Ruby excused himself several times. Without his management knowing, he went to the bathroom to snort heroin, taking 40-minute breaks at a time — but thinking he'd only been in there for five minutes. After each bathroom break, he reemerged, noticeably nodding at the table. Towards the end of the day, their management staged an intervention. "I didn't see it coming," says Ruby. They gave him an ultimatum: Keep doing what you're doing and $uicideboy$ will be no more. "It was the wake-up call I needed, because that was the worst thing I could imagine happening."

Ruby immediately took a trip out to the same Californian retreat where his cousin had been staying. After two days there, once the drugs began to wear off, Ruby entered a state of hypermania. He would remain awake for the next two weeks. Then, like his cousin, he experienced a moment of divine clarity, and finally, he fell asleep.

He awoke a sober man, the narratives he'd been telling himself all throughout his life began to look flimsy under this new, well-rested light. "You know, I would think about quitting snorting pills or something, but then I'd be like, Nah, I'm a fucking rock star. Like, you tell yourself some wild shit to keep it going." Now, he describes therapy as "amazing," sobriety as "incredible."

$crim's relationship to sobriety has been more complicated. "It's been painful because I've had to deal with shit that I've never had to deal with," he says. "To this day, I'm not good at just sitting and feeling shit, it's always felt easier to run." He pins his biggest psychic change — the reason why he's been able to sit with the pain rather than flee from it — on his newfound sense of accountability. Where he once felt himself a mere victim of the world, now, he's accepted that he's played a large part in his own pain. "I had a part in every single one of these things: the anger, the resentment. To the normal person, that may not

INDEX



TEETH

9.22.23

CENTURY MEDIA

$uicideboy$, Bonnaroo Music & Arts Festival, Manchester, Tennessee, 2022

GARY MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

be a big deal, but for me, it literally blew me away."

It's been a long journey and a steady trudge for both men to have rediscovered themselves. They've spent much of their lives trained on self-destruction, and now they face a new, and arguably much scarier, unknown path: survival. Having built their career around rapping about suicide under the influence of heavy drugs, they had to rapidly shift tact and figure out how to create art about survival in a stone-cold state of sobriety. "For the first four or five months of sobriety, I spent all my time in the studio unable to open my laptop," says $crim. "I'd built up this bullshit in my head that it was the drugs that were giving me my creativity. How could I even dare to be creative without them?" The process of simply allowing himself to create without the influence of drugs, he says, "has been like learning how to walk again."

Now, the boys are facing the biggest tour of their lives — sober. Having spent much of their previous Grey Day tours too fucked up on drugs to remember anything about them, now they're bracing themselves to play Madison Square Garden — one of the most formidable live music venues in the world — without their blinders on. "We don't really celebrate our achievements a lot, but when we found out we were playing MSG we kind of had to stop ourselves in our tracks," says $crim. "Usually we're like, a billion streams, cool, let's get back to the studio. But this, being from New Orleans especially, this is a big deal for us."

Both cousins had been keen to bring Ghostemane on tour with them. "You know, he's just been kind of like sitting idly for the last couple years and I thought if we got him to come out that it would be pretty big, you know, for him and for the fans and for the tour in general," says $crim. They called up the trap-metal artist last year; he hardly needed convincing. The Grey Day 2023 mix will be rounded out by New York rap-metal upstarts City Morgue, along with Freddie Dredd, Sematary and Ramirez.

Around the time of their tour, they'll be releasing the fifth installment of *I No Longer Fear the Razor Guarding My Heel* – what they both describe as "the best music we've ever done." Their forthcoming music is the result of three years clean; of reconnecting with themselves, their purpose, their deep love for one another and the music they make together. "I finally got that feeling of like, I want to go to the studio and make fucking music with my cousin again," says Ruby. The proof's in the sound: It's breezier, more buoyant, tinged with hope rather than deathly dread. "Gained a million listeners on Spotify overnight," Ruby sings with well-earned jubilation on "Finding Shelter in My Larynx." Together, they sound euphoric.

Now, when they hear their fans say that they've saved their life, they can *really* hear it. "I used to not mean shit to myself, so it was hard for me to believe I meant shit to anyone else," says $crim. "But I feel this sense of responsibility that I'm now grateful for, like, I better not fuck up."

"Yeah," Ruby agrees. "We cannot fuck this up."

LISTEN TO NAPALM'S LATEST RELEASES NOW: OPEN SPOTIFY, SEARCH AND SCAN!

K.K.'s Priest

THE

Sinner Rides Again

Judas Priest legends K.K. DOWNING & Tim "Ripper" Owens!

The fury of CLASSIC HEAVY METAL!

OUT 9/29 CD | VINYL | DIGITAL | LIMITED EDITIONS

AVAILABLE EXCLUSIVELY VIA NAPALMRECORDSAMERICA.COM

/NAPALMRECORDS
/NAPALMRECORDS
/NAPALMRECORDSOFFICIAL
/NAPALMRECORDS

visit our online store with music and merch
NAPALMRECORDSAMERICA.COM

NAPALM RECORDS

POP

After shedding the pain of a tumultuous relationship, the post-genre provocateur is back in control – and ready to dance

TEXT **Eli Enis**
PHOTOGRAPHY **Kate Biel**

A GRAMMY-WINNING TAYLOR SWIFT PRODUCER, A MULTI-PLATINUM POP SONG-writer for Nick Jonas and a shapeshifting YouTube star-turned-heavy-music phenomenon walk into a bar…

There's no joke here, it's just the truth. Poppy's been hitting the town. The 28-year-old musician and her longtime co-songwriter Simon Wilcox have become "three peas in a pod" with mainstream pop architect Ali Payami. And if you go to the right Los Angeles hotspot, on the right night, when the lighting is proper, you just might catch a glimpse of this unlikely trio having the time of their lives.

"We go out and we have fancy dinners, the three of us," Poppy giddily recounts to *Revolver*. "And we just talk about everything under the sun. It's great."

"And when I say out," she clarifies, "I mean only after dark and in dimly lit places. I like it to be hard to see. It just makes me feel comfortable."

Clearly, that sort of dusky, cosmopolitan atmosphere has been rubbing off on Poppy. Her most recent album, *Zig* — produced by her new bestie Payami and co-written with Wilcox — sounds like it's meant to bang out of the speakers, through the grinding bodies, and all the way up to the cozy balcony of a lavishly sleazy club.

"I intended it to be music that I could dance to," says Poppy, born Moriah Rose Pereira. That's a world away from the raw, aggressive catharsis of her previous full-length album, 2021's rock-centric *Flux*, and even last year's punky, blown-out *Stagger* EP. A lot has happened since then, so Poppy's in a different place now.

"I don't think I'll ever feel out of a transitional stage," she muses. "I'm less scattered nowadays. I'm very intentional about the direction and my steps, but I am, very much so, on a ride. I'm the driver in the vehicle, but I'm very much on a ride."

At the time of this interview, in late July, Poppy hasn't performed live in eight months. After joining Smashing Pumpkins and Jane's Addiction's fall 2022 run, Poppy was forced to cancel her solo dates after she came down with a debilitating case of the flu. "It's really not like me to cancel shows. I get really sad," Poppy remembers glumly. "I was crying on the way to the hospital to get an IV, not being able to stand up straight, and then crying on the way back to the bus, calling my manager and saying, 'I don't think I can do this. I can't stand.'"

Another thing she couldn't stand was her record label. And upon returning to L.A., two things happened: Poppy healed from her illness, and left Republic Records soon after dropping the four-song *Stagger*. ("We tried it with an EP," she says of her brief time on the major label. "I started to work on an album while under their umbrella, but our ideals did not align at all.") Now she's back with Sumerian Records, the modern-metal powerhouse known for djent royalty like Animals as Leaders and alt-metalcore champs Bad Omens, who had released Poppy's last several projects prior to *Stagger*.

For the fans who thought Poppy's return to Sumerian might produce another headbanging onslaught like *I Disagree* — her 2020 breakthrough that earned her the distinction of being the first solo female artist nominated for a Best Metal Performance Grammy (for the pop-metal collision "BLOODMONEY") — don't hold your breath. *Zig* is yet another zag for Poppy, who's always reinvented her sound, look and thematic focus with each new album era.

There're still metal elements and experimental songwriting choices that anchor her in the heavy-music sphere, a lane she's occupied in the half-decade since she unhitched from the blonde-haired, plainclothes YouTube-video eccentric that comprised the first few years of the great Poppy experiment. However, her platinum hairdo is back for *Zig*, as seen in the *shibari* warrior pose Poppy assumes on the cover art. Musically, the album is a decided swerve into more — *ahem* — poppier musical territory. The final product was the result of much deliberation, with her "completing" it at least a couple different times before going back to edit the track list into what we hear today.

"I feel like it tells me when it's complete," Poppy says of her album-making process. "We're always ever-evolving and changing, and I thought that it was going to be one way when I began the process. Then it told me what it was going to be, and I had to listen."

Zig pulls from a different sonic palette than the grungy punk of *Flux* and the chugging industrial-metal guitars that encompassed *I Disagree*. The styles and textures of the music are informed by Poppy's love of the eclectic breakcore pioneer Venetian Snares, as well as funereal electronic sculptors like Burial and Andy Stott. The choruses are bigger and bolder, and her vocals are delivered with more swagger and suaveness. She still screams every now and then, but her howls are more backgrounded. *Zig* mostly luxuriates in thrumming basslines and clobbering electronic drums, with synths that squelch like latex, occasionally shrieking when they rub up against Poppy's more-tempered-than-usual metal outbursts.

A song like the narcotically clanging "Knockoff" is like if Lady Gaga actually *sounded* as metal as she looked during her "Heavy Metal Lover" era. It's dark, sultry, a little bit eerie, but also insanely fucking catchy. Elsewhere, she toys with manic hardstyle bass on the aptly titled "Hard," and gets outwardly playful and silly on "Motorbike," an ode to Poppy's fawning admiration for women who she sees rolling "with a powerful machine between [their] legs."

It's different, but undeniably Poppy, and she's quick to credit her intuitive collaborations with the likeminded Payami. Although he's best known for working with megastars like the Weeknd, Taylor Swift and Ariana Grande — a mainstream echelon that Poppy has yet to reach (and, as we get into later, doesn't even aspire to) — she warmly describes Payami as a fellow "outsider."

"He's like me," Poppy explains. "He's *outside* of the outside. Like, if there's a room for the outsiders, we're in the hallway."

STYLING: ERIK ZIEMBA AT PARADIS; MAKEUP: JAIME DIAZ AT PARADIS USING ISAMAYA BEAUTY; HAIR: MIKEY LORENZANO

"Being someone where you never know what you're going to get on any given day — that's alluring to some, terrifying to others."
— Poppy

LAST TIME YOU SPOKE WITH *REVOLVER*, YOU SAID THAT THE *STAGGER* SONGS WERE WRITTEN DURING A MOMENT OF RECKONING WITH TRAUMATIC TOXIC RELATIONSHIPS YOU HAD GONE THROUGH. WAS *ZIG* ALSO BORN FROM THE SAME CIRCUMSTANCES?

POPPY I'd say completely different circumstances. *Stagger* was a very tumultuous period, and then *Zig* was written during a period of more… Well, it was throughout the course of a relationship that I was in. Actually, it started and it ended when the relationship started and ended. Of course, some of the songs that are on that record have nothing to do with that relationship, but alas. "Flicker" is a song that's coming out with a visual, and the chorus of that song is, "I flicker between fear and a vision of forever," which is about being in less-than-ideal relationships. My selection process has not been the best. [*Laughs*] I say that laughing, by the way, because I'm not sad about it. It's a little bit funny.

But with "Flicker" it's like, certain things in love were making sense and aligning, but also, I wasn't being fulfilled and not all of the boxes were getting checked. It was like: This is something that I've never done before; let's see where this goes. I guess I could see what a forever would look like, but I'm also terrified of it, and I think it would be a very unfulfilling forever. There's also points of feeling like somebody might be with you just because you are a bit of a mixed bag and not because there's an actual connection there.

A MIXED BAG HOW SO? Me, myself being the mixed bag. Just being someone where you never know what you're going to get on any given day. That's alluring to some, terrifying to others. But in this relationship, I feel like it was appealing to the person that I was with, but they also didn't know how to handle it, and it left me feeling very hollow.

IN "THE ATTIC" YOU SING, "ALWAYS QUICK TO RUSH IN, ALWAYS ALL OR NOTHING." DOES THAT SPEAK TO THAT RELATIONSHIP EXPERIENCE AS WELL? Yeah, historically I've done that. But also, it's coming to terms and finding similarities between how you deal with human interaction and relationships, and where they stem from when you are small. Stumbling upon the similarities, and how a lot of things can be traced to the things you observed when you were not entirely conscious of what's going on when you're a kid.

DID YOUR PARENTS ALSO STRUGGLE WITH JUMPING IN TOO FAST TO THINGS, OR HAVING UNHEALTHY DYNAMICS IN RELATIONSHIPS? Yeah, for sure. All of the adults that were around me always had very unhealthy dynamics, and that doesn't create the best situation to try to strive for.

DO YOU HAVE A GOOD RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR PARENTS NOW? I don't, no. It's very complex, but I think everybody has that in some way. Not exactly with their parents, but any sort of human relationship; I think we're all just trying to figure it out. I left home when I was really small, so that always created a sort of independence for me and self-reliance of like, I don't need anybody to tell me what to do, and you've only ever disappointed me, and I'm the only one that has my own back. So, that mindset.

IN "KNOCKOFF" YOU SING THAT YOU'RE SEARCHING FOR THE "REAL THING." WHAT'S THE REALNESS THAT YOU'RE YEARNING FOR? The "real thing" to me is love that is stable and consistent, and somebody that has done enough self-exploration to know that they're imperfect and love themselves in spite of that. That's the real thing.

DO YOU FEEL LIKE YOU'VE FOUND THE REAL THING WITHIN YOURSELF? OR ARE YOU SEARCHING FOR REALNESS FOR YOURSELF, AS WELL AS IN A PARTNER? I'm definitely not searching for a partner, at all. I'm just going to put that out there: I am not looking. I am enjoying solitude at the moment, actually. As far as myself, I will leave that question open, because I'm just trying to float on every day on little bits of happiness. I'm just trying to jump from one bit of happiness to the other. If it's my cat that wakes me up in the morning or if it's drawing a pretty picture or making a T-shirt, little things that bring me joy, that's what I want.

STYLING CREDITS, COVER AND OPENER: LACEY DALIMONTE TOP, LACEY DALIMONTE SKIRT LACEY DALIMONTE CUFFS, LACEY DALIMONTE NECKLACE, 3 JUIN SHOES; TOC AND OPPOSITE PAGE: BALENCIAGA JACKET, BALENCIAGA SHOES, BUSTED BRAND GLOVES

IS ENJOYING SOLITUDE A NEW SENSATION FOR YOU? Yeah, I'd say. I think it allows space for your own thoughts. When you can slow down and be the observer of your own mind, there's more to it — instead of always trying to run from yourself and your thoughts and your living location, or to the next thing. When I say float on, I mean little joys in everyday life.

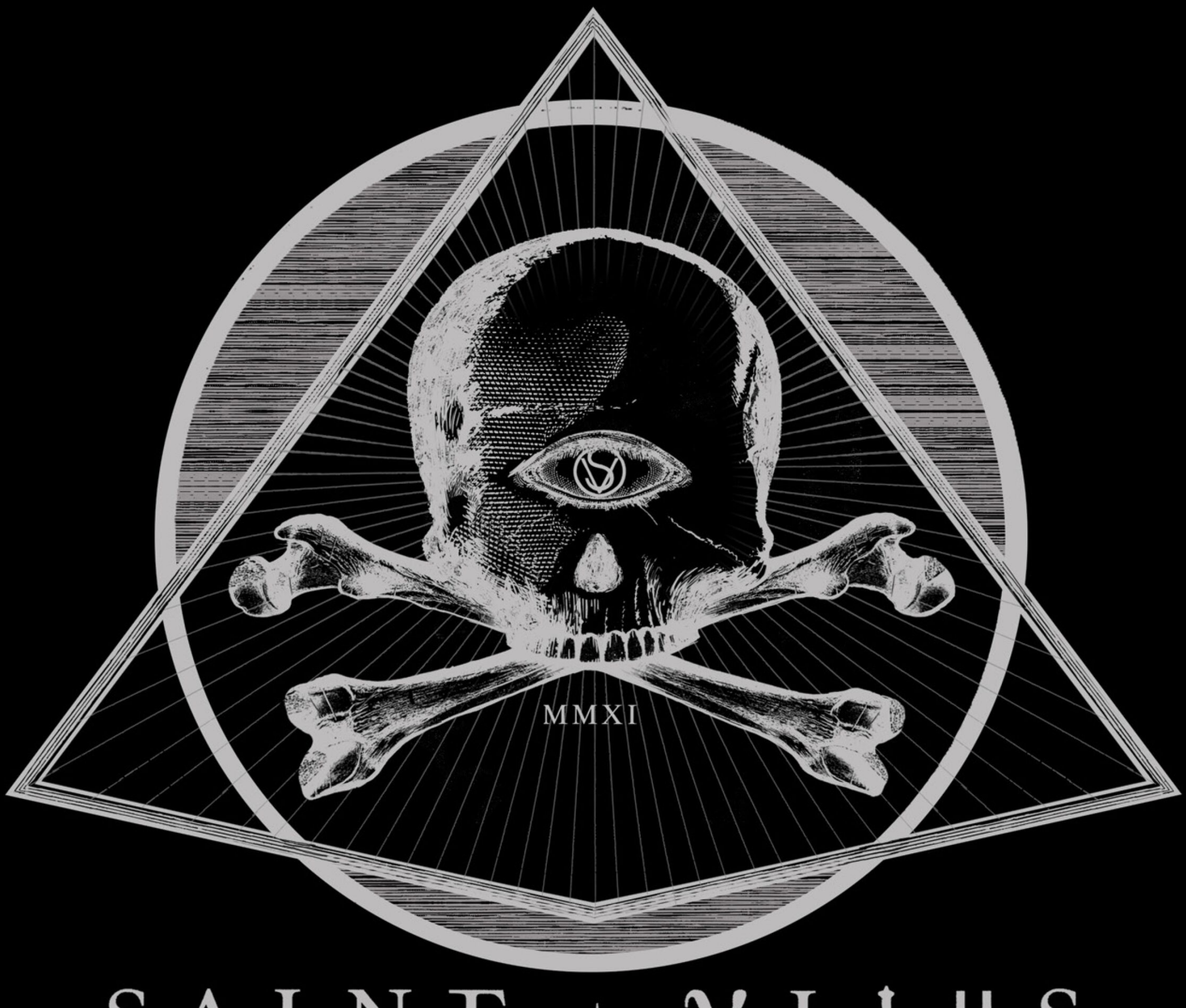
THIS RECORD HAS HUGE, BANGING POP SONGS. DO YOU SEE *ZIG* AS YOUR MAINSTREAM BREAKOUT MOMENT? WOULD YOU EVEN WANT THAT? I feel wonderful about where I'm at. I think there are a lot of people with similar outlooks and understandings that could like my music or the message of Poppy or what I create, so I welcome them in. But I don't think music should ever be something that gets made in an effort of becoming more famous. I think the right people will find it. I'm creating music to better understand myself, and I think the people that show up to a Poppy show feel that and they're listening to better understand themself.

RECENTLY, DOJA CAT AND OTHER ARTISTS, LIKE BAD OMENS AND ETHEL CAIN, HAVE PUSHED BACK AGAINST THE PORTION OF THEIR FANBASES WHO HAVE A VERY TOXIC, PARASOCIAL RELATIONSHIP WITH THEM. HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT THE POPPY SUPERFANS WHO KNOW EVERYTHING ABOUT YOU AND GO TO WAR IN YOUR NAME ON THE INTERNET? I love my fans. I'm not familiar with what she's expressing or dealing with right now publicly. But I think that what I create is… It's something that I'm proud of and when I release something I want people to consume it in the form that I approve it's supposed to be heard in. Once the song is recorded, mixed and mastered, and then released, *that* is what I approve of. But if any work is put out there, stolen before I deem it releasable, I think it's a violation of privacy. It feels like a psychological rape because it's a nonconsensual exchange. That's not how the music is intended to be heard and consumed, and I think it's unfortunate. It's a violation.

But I try to not look at anything that gets written about me or commented on. I have my team posting things for me, because I don't want to know. … Social media is necessary in a lot of ways, but it's also unnecessary and unhealthy in a lot of ways. I think it's bad for our mental health. We've seen evidence of that at this point, and I think it continues to get worse.

ABSOLUTELY. IS THAT WHY YOU GOT OFF TWITTER? I proudly deleted my Twitter, I think over a year ago. I've always disliked Twitter, and I don't like it when people use social media as their diary. I think it's very strange. And also, everything else that gets wrapped up in it: People with politically charged stances and people expecting me to have a stance on certain things. I'm like, I am an entertainer. I am not a politician.

STYLING CREDITS, LEFT: SAINT LAURENT DRESS, SAINT LAURENT CUFFS, JIMMY CHOO SHOES; RIGHT: NAMIILIA JACKET, NAMIILIA SKIRT, BALENCIAGA SHOES



SAINT ϕ VITUS

BAR

tickets • merch • satan ☞ www.saintvitusbar.com

on instagram and twitter at @saintvitusbar

1120 Manhattan Ave, Brooklyn, NY 11222

CODE ORANGE

The Pittsburgh heavyweights threw everything they had at their transformative new album. It nearly broke them – and also might have set them free. TEXT **Eli Enis** PHOTOGRAPHY **Alexis Gross**

"THE LAST COUPLE OF YEARS HAVE BEEN THE HARDEST WE'VE EVER HAD,"

SAYS CODE ORANGE FRONTMAN JAMI MORGAN. "AND it's not even close."

While every band suffered from the coronavirus pandemic, the Pittsburgh heavyweights were knee-capped particularly hard. *Underneath* — their third album since changing their name from Code Orange Kids, and second for Roadrunner Records — dropped on March 13th, 2020, just days before nationwide lock-downs went into effect. In addition to a byzantine album-making process that nearly drove the band to the brink of insanity, Code Orange had worked themselves to the bone designing an elaborate stage setup for a headlining tour they'd have to cancel the day before takeoff. They adapted by putting on innovative livestream events during the pandemic's first year, but the band desperately wanted *Underneath* to launch them beyond the underground scene they'd already conquered with 2014's brutal *I Am King* and 2017's catchier, more industrialized *Forever*.

Sure, they already had a Grammy nomination on their resume for *Forever* (they'd earn another nom in 2021 for *Underneath*), had logged tours supporting Deftones and Trivium, and were signed to a major label. But in the age of pitiful Spotify payouts, rising young bands need to be on the road to make money. And with that prospect gone, Code Orange were still effectively starving artists operating on a shoestring budget compared to their arena-headlining peers in Grammy-land. They put everything they had to give into *Underneath*, an anxious, gutsy, oppressively digitized hardcore blitzkrieg that, while appreciated by many, didn't provide the breakthrough into career stability that they were aiming for.

"You work so hard on something and then it comes out and then you're hit in that way," he laments, reflecting soberly on *Underneath*'s unfortunate timing. Morgan also acknowledges that he and his bandmates were fortunate to come out the other end of the pandemic in good health. But "in terms of a band, it was hard," he says. "When you're trying to drag it up a hill like we were for a year, there're ripple effects of that. It's very tough to feel like you have something really amazing that you're presenting, and to feel stifled in a way."

"But I do feel that, genuinely, everything happens for a reason," Morgan adds, his mood perking up. "I feel all the darkness had created this little opening, and I could see the other side."

Code Orange's transcendent new album, *The Above*, is a chronicle of the band's epic journey to the other side. And to create it, they went for broke — again. It was their most physically taxing and involved recording process yet. The album is filled with their most ambitious musical ideas. The theme — a cinematic juxtaposition between light and dark, reality and illusion, organic and digital, and a lyrical portrayal of the band's roller-coaster journey through self-doubt and industry fuckery towards epiphanic purity — is, well, operatic. In many ways, it made Code Orange stronger than ever. It also might've broken them.

"I don't know how much more we have in us," Morgan muses. "I really don't. But I know that we had it this time, and we really gave it all this time."

The 30-year-old Morgan is seated in the living room of his and his girlfriend's Pittsburgh apartment, which he excitedly shows off to *Revolver*'s Zoom screen before our conversation begins. He beckons proudly to his neatly organized dining area, tips his laptop to show off the bright, flowery colors of his living room decor, and points to a blooming backyard with lush, green grass and a white garden arbor. Then, he introduces us to Shelly, his 30-year-old pet tortoise; a creature that's wired with an innate nonchalance and sedentary Zen that Morgan — breathlessly diligent and verbally locomotive as ever — juxtaposes greatly.

"The band is my life, and all I do is think about this thing, man," he sighs. Code Orange has been Morgan's sole focus in life since he co-founded the band as a 14-year-old in 2008. He's never made time for other hobbies and interests. "I wonder sometimes what it would be like to think about something else."

For now, it's all Code, all the time. Seconds after showing off his new digs, you can see Morgan's gears turn as he remarks on how the floral, bucolic setting of his current living space — a stark contrast to the dark, austere apartment he lived in back in 2020 when we discussed the dank, claustrophobic *Underneath* — may have subconsciously influenced the aesthetics of *The Above*. Albums are multimedia creations for Code Orange — Morgan, guitarist-vocalist Reba Meyers, synth-programmer Eric "Shade" Balderose, bassist Joe Goldman, guitarist Dom Landolina and drummer Max Portnoy — and the artwork, photos and accompanying videos for their latest are immensely inspired by films like *Vanilla Sky*, *Requiem for a Dream* and *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*.

"I like how all those movies look," Morgan enthuses. "Film is at its peak, we're using digital elements, but it hasn't gotten to this mid-2000s, ugly, digital thing yet. The same way metal did."

The Above's elaborate packaging features blossoming flowers, creamy white borders, naturalistic fonts and a back-cover photo of the band standing in a ripe beach sunset. At first glance, it evokes the warmest feelings of any Code Orange visual era yet, but a closer look reveals the macabre truth beneath it all. The band's name is a twisted composite of creepy bugs and decayed flora. The blue-eyed figure on the front cover has a face with visible stitches, hinting that fabrication is afoot. And the top edge of the balmy beach photo is peeled back to unveil that it's just a canvas, artificially glowing inside a dark, constructed studio.

"This thing is definitely the most effort, once again, that I've put into any singular project," Morgan says. To wit, he even adopted a new look that mirrors the

Code Orange, (from left) Reba Meyers, Eric “Shade” Balderose, Max Portnoy, Jami Morgan, Joe Goldman and Dom Landolina

album's heaven-soaked-with-battery-acid visual setting, bleaching his hair and trading his industrial-raver leathers for tattered white tees and blue jeans.

Musically, *The Above* inhabits that elevated plane. The 14-track album is by far Code Orange's most eclectic yet, packing in towering grunge anthems, vein-popping hardcore surges and theatrical, genre-fucking rock songs that wriggle between melody and menace. There are screaming guitar solos, elegant string arrangements and moody trip-hop beats. Morgan and Meyers sing — fuck that, *belt* — with more gusto, skill and soul-scraping emotion than ever before. Smashing Pumpkins mastermind Billy Corgan even shows up to guest on the *Mellon Collie*-esque highlight "Take Shape." Superstar alt-rock engineer Steve Albini (the guy who did Nirvana's *In Utero*) recorded the band live in his famed Electrical Audio studio, capturing a raw, organic side of Code Orange that contrasts purposefully with the mechanized density of *Forever* and *Underneath*.

The band are prouder of it than anything they've ever done, but Morgan isn't naive. He knows that the album and its many intricacies could completely backfire on Code Orange. After all, they are a band who came from hardcore and still have roots in the scene. And despite the genre's increased openness to sonic diversity (as seen in the success of peers like Turnstile, Scowl and Zulu), everything Code Orange are presenting on *The Above* — gallant hooks, experimental production, heady lyrical themes — has the potential to alienate more headbangers than it attracts.

"My life could be really turned upside down by this going *terribly* in a *terrible* way," Morgan deadpans, before a smile cracks through his teeth. "That's what bands should do! Put your nuts on the table. Roll the dice. Do something fresh. Change your fucking hair. Change your whole fucking vibe and just go for it, man."

Change has been a constant in camp Code over the last three years. Since live music returned, Morgan moved from behind the drums — where he'd always sat screaming and pounding — to holding the mic as the band's de facto frontman. The guy they recruited to fill Morgan's spot behind the kit only lasted a year. So,

"Bands should roll the dice. Do something fresh. Change your fucking hair. Change your whole fucking vibe and just go for it, man."
— Jami Morgan

the group tapped Portnoy — son of ex-Dream Theater drummer Mike Portnoy, and bandleader of his own metalcore band Tallah — to become their full-time drummer. He's been working out great. Portnoy, who Morgan calls a "superstar," immediately meshed with Code Orange's intense practice regime and recently moved to Pittsburgh, where the band formed all those years ago and still calls home base today.

There have been other shifts behind the scenes. Code Orange have new management now, and left Roadrunner Records for Blue Grape Music, a new label spearheaded by former Roadrunner executives David Rath and Cees Wessels. Otherwise, the band have only become more independent and driven in their singular vision. Balderose, the band's co-founding guitarist who's since become their programmer and synth player, also leveled up to become their in-house engineer while making *The Above*. His ability to record and produce Code Orange's music, without having to rely on an outside producer like they did in the past, has brought them to a higher tier of machine-like efficiency.

"It feels incredibly powerful in terms of what we can achieve," says Balderose, speaking from his apartment a couple days after Code Orange returned from a successful European tour in late June. He points to "Shatter" — the theme song they wrote for WWE wrestler Bray Wyatt in 2022 — as an example of the band's growing self-sufficiency. Within 24 hours of receiving the offer, Code Orange had not only written the song, but they were set up in their studio to track it.

"We can do pretty much anything that we need to do," Balderose underscores. "There's nothing holding us back."

Meyers agrees. During a Zoom call from the road in Europe — the day after Code Orange co-headlined Manchester, England's Outbreak Fest (which Morgan calls an "all-timer" set) — the guitarist-singer is feeling optimistic about where the band is at both internally and creatively.

"Things are coming around full circle for us, in terms of our sound and everything," says Meyers, who also co-founded Code Orange with Morgan and Balderose. "I think the *Underneath* phase of our journey was probably one of the most difficult phases, and I think now it's getting a little bit more relaxed, in the sense of just knowing where we're at and knowing what we want."

Indeed, their vision for *The Above* reflects a new level of confidence among the band. Befitting that self-assurance, Morgan calls it Code Orange's "Black Album"— in reference to Metallica's 1991 anthemic hard-rock blockbuster. Balderose and Meyers both use the word "open" to describe its sound. Collectively, all three founding members believe that it's their most definitive statement to date.

"I'm ready to prove to everybody that we don't need a producer at this point," Balderose says. "We don't need anything. That's why we left Roadrunner. That's why we've done several business decisions in the recent past that've basically spun us on our own. We're ready to just do the shit and take credit for it. Because we're one of the hardest working bands out here."

Someone who recognizes — and probably feels a kinship with — their uncompromising drive is Billy

Corgan, a flamboyant obsessive who's proudly run Smashing Pumpkins on his own terms for over 30 years. While Corgan's voice briefly pops up during the bridge of "Take Shape," Meyers says that their collaborative hangout session involved "more talking than playing." The grunge god affirmed Code Orange's rule-breaking approach to songwriting and encouraged them to "trust your instinct," as Meyers recalls. Her biggest takeaway from Corgan was, "don't try to conform to anyone else's idea." For Morgan, it was his advice to "fucking swing for the hills."

Swing, they did. For *Underneath*, the band created painstakingly detailed demos of their head-scratching songs and then brought them to two outside producers — Nick Raskulinecz (Ghost, Korn, Foo Fighters) and Will Yip (Turnstile, Nothing) — to recreate them from the ground up. But it turned out that Code Orange's specific vision — that their traditional rock instrumentation would be spliced, cyborg-like, with Balderose's heavy electronic programming — really only made sense to the band. So the whole process was cumbersome to say the least.

"No one really does what we did on that record as far as how we [made] it," explains Balderose, who relied on the direction of programming wizard Chris Vrenna (Nine Inch Nails) to keep him from walking off the job. "In some ways it was a nightmare. In other ways, it was a revelation for me."

For *The Above*, Balderose took on the role that Raskulinecz, Yip, and on previous records, Converge's Kurt Ballou, had filled: sitting behind the decks with Pro Tools running while the band worked through the new songs. Anything Balderose picked up during those sessions was a potential candidate for the final record, and the band could tinker with all their far-out ideas.

Crucially, Balderose also speaks Morgan's esoteric language. The singer-songwriter (who split playing drums 50/50 with Portnoy on *The Above*) had a notepad of abstract song objectives that he'd commission Balderose to try and bring to life on the computer.

"Jami's ideas were insane," Balderose says, shaking his head. "He'll be like, 'I want a beat that sounds like the difference between right and wrong.'"

After months of clicking puzzle pieces together, the band traveled to Albini's studio in Chicago to do something they'd never done before: record the core of the band (guitars, bass, drums) live in a room, no overdubs and no mixed-and-matched takes like the hyper-chopped-up *Underneath*. The reason they went with Albini is precisely because the eccentric engineer famously offers no creative input like a typical producer would. He's just there to use his world-class studio to record the best possible sound according to the band's wishes.

"It was probably our best recording experience ever," says Balderose. Meyers believes it captured a side of the band that wasn't present on previous records. "It brought a little bit more of our personality into the music, which sometimes gets lost in the recording process," she says. "Whereas live, it has that kind of energy."

From there, Code Orange took the record back to Pittsburgh where they spent many more months recording vocals, adding in Balderose's electronic parts, tracking strings and assembling the goods for those enigmatic visuals. Balderose says he can't wait for people to hear it: "So I can feel justified in the torment I put myself through." Morgan sounds simultaneously proud and a touch plaintive while recounting the exhausting affair.

"I see the process in the future having to be different, because it was very immersive," Morgan says. "People can only be stretched so far [to] where they can snap back and regenerate. Some people, when they're stretched, they stay stretched."

Code Orange keep putting themselves through these Sisyphean undertakings — making these all-encompassing albums, militantly practicing, taking on way too many day-to-day tasks (merch fulfillment, web design, video creation) — because it's the only way they know how. It's the only way it's worth it for them. During *The Above*'s titanic closing title-track, Morgan and Meyers sing with all their might over crunching guitars, "Acceptance is a faraway place, but I'll keep beating it in/If I'm still breathing," underscoring their die-hard commitment to chasing the light at the end of the tunnel. From there, the chorus fades into industrial racket and the song ends with the same distorted pulsation that chimes at the top of *I Am King*, creating a literal loop between today and where Code Orange's kids-less journey began almost 10 years ago.

"Is this going to be our last record? No, I don't think so," Morgan deliberates after an hour of intense, introspective discussion that's laced with twinges of conclusive language. "It's the end of something, though. I think it's also the beginning of something else much greater."

Furthermore, he says "fuck that" to the mere idea of an *I Am King* 10-year-anniversary tour, even if the fans wanted it. Even though Code Orange openly desire the material means to make their highly conceptual art without putting themselves in financial peril, they'd rather fail than take the easy route. Risking it all with an album like *The Above* is the only way.

"When I look at the landscape of popular music, the hole is there for *The Above*," Morgan forecasts. "Who knows how it's going to go? I think that's a beautiful thing. To me, that's fun. That's how this shit should be. It should be in-your-face. It should be a dice roll. It shouldn't be just trying to maintain. We never wanted to maintain. Did we put our money where our mouth is? Is this a maintenance record, my friend?"

"No," he abruptly enthuses. "It's a fucking put-your-whole-career-on-the-line record — *again*. And we just keep doing it. And we're just *going* to keep doing it." R

NEW FROM METAL BLADE RECORDS

Michael Poulsen: Guitar
Marc Grewe: Vocals
Morten Toft Hansen: Drums

For more than 20 years, vocalist/guitarist Michael Poulsen has been spearheading Danish rock and roll machine **Volbeat**, releasing eight full-lengths, selling millions of albums, and filling stadiums worldwide. Before fronting **Volbeat**, however, Poulsen formed death metal band **Dominus**, which recorded four fast, brutal albums in the mid '90s. When Poulsen was putting together songs for **Volbeat**'s 2021 album, ***Servant of the Mind***, he wrote a bunch of death metal riffs and saved them on his hard drive. Then, when he was done with the **Volbeat** record, he reopened the rusty gates to Armageddon and started putting together songs for his new death metal band **Asinhell**, whose debut album ***Impii Hora*** (Latin for Ungodly Hour), is a tribute to Poulsen's favorite old-school groups. The songs are rooted in crushing riffs yet injected with strong guitar hooks and shout-along refrains.

"It's such a dream come true for me to get to be on fucking Metal Blade Records," Poulsen exclaims. *"When they said they wanted to put out the album, I felt like I was 17 years old again. I was like, 'Oh my God, I'm making a deal with Metal Blade! How cool is that?' It was like I was finally getting the record deal I dreamed of when I was a teenager."*

ASINHELL

Impii hora

September 29, 2023

ASINHELL

METALBLADE.COM/ASINHELL

@METALBLADERECORDS

METAL BLADE RECORDS

FOR WHOLESALE INQUIRIES: ***WWW.METALBLADE.COM/WHOLESALEUS***

Q&T

Corey Taylor

The Slipknot and Stone Sour frontman is known for fearlessly speaking his mind. On the eve of his new solo album, we tested his mettle with some of our readers' hardest-hitting questions.

TEXT **Dan Epstein**
PHOTOGRAPHY **Travis Shinn**

COREY TAYLOR IS A HOARDER.

THE SLIPKNOT AND STONE SOUR FRONTMAN FREELY admits as much — only it isn't rusty junk, old newspapers or rare collectibles that are piled up around his Las Vegas home.

"I have so many fucking songs," Taylor says with a laugh of his growing collection. It's mid-June, and he's speaking to *Revolver* from a hotel room in Munich, Germany, where the singer is preparing to perform with Slipknot at the city's massive and historic Königsplatz. "Like, it's seriously becoming an issue. I'm always writing new ones, but I also never get rid of anything old that I have a gut feeling about."

"Beyond," the explosive lead single from *CMF2*, Taylor's new and second solo album, is a prime example of his stubborn refusal to let a good idea go to waste. "That was something I tried to bring in with Stone Sour in one shape or form 15, 16 years ago," he says. "At the time, they didn't want to use it. I've rewritten it a couple of times since then, but this time around I kind of stripped it down to the sticks and restarted it."

There are other revived and reanimated compositions on *CMF2*, as well — including the atmospheric confessional "Midnight," the countrified power ballad "Breath of Fresh Smoke" and the slamming, 'Knotesque "Post Traumatic Blues." "The cadence for 'Post Traumatic Blues' was something I actually tried to incorporate on the *Iowa* album," he reveals. "So that tells you how long that's been sitting around. It just never found a home before now."

Which is not to say that *CMF2* is some kind of odds-and-sods buffet thrown together from Taylor's leftovers. On the contrary, the 13-song album — co-produced with longtime collaborator Jay Ruston, and featuring most of the same musicians who backed Taylor on his first solo LP, 2020's *CMFT* — is a powerful and compelling listening experience, a multifaceted hard-rock statement that immediately pulls you in with the ominous invitation of "The Box" and doesn't let go until the final notes of the Metallica-tinged "Dead Flies" fade into troubled silence. It's a stronger, more fully formed outing than his previous solo album, filled with material that will delight Taylor fans of any mutation.

"With this album, I kind of wanted to bury the first one," he explains. "Not because I didn't like it, but the first album was a collection of songs I'd had forever, and I was never sure when I was ever gonna get to put that stuff out. So, it was just an excuse for me to dig into my inner singer-songwriter, and try to put as much of that out as possible.

"But then I was like, 'Well, OK, what's album number two gonna be?' I definitely wanted it to be a little heavier. I definitely wanted it to have darker moments. I wanted it to have elements from the first album, because I didn't want the first album to feel like the ugly stepchild that everybody wants to beat up. [*Laughs*] But at the same time, it needed to feel *bigger* than the first album. It needed to feel more complete, more like a journey. And that is definitely what this one is. From start to finish, for me, it's probably one of the best things I've ever done."

In typical hyper-productive fashion, Taylor and his band — guitarists Zach Throne and Christian Martucci, bassist Eliot Lorango and drummer Dustin Robert — banged out 26 songs in just two months of recording at The Hideout in Las Vegas. "And it all sounded killer," Taylor offers. "So, the real problem came down to picking which songs were actually gonna go on the album." The surplus material, he promises, will see the light of day next year in a package like 2022's *CMFB...Sides* collection, though there's also the possibility that some of those songs will be aired out this fall during Taylor's upcoming U.S. solo tour (which will feature support from electronic punk duo Wargasm, rap outfit Oxymorrons and rocker Luna Aura).

"We've got a *ton* of material, and we want to be the band that can kind of pick and choose what the set list is gonna be on any given date," he says. "We want to keep the audience coming back going, 'We have no idea what they're gonna play tonight!'" Taylor's solo sets routinely draw upon Slipknot and Stone Sour songs, as well.

"The stuff from those bands that I put in my set is the stuff that either I wrote, or it's my melody line on it, or a song I helped create — I have a personal attachment to everything I put in the set," he explains. "I will never be the guy that puts out a solo album and then refuses to play other stuff that people really want to hear me sing. That would be incredibly greedy and egotistical, to be honest. You're there to entertain. If you go to see David Lee Roth and he doesn't play Van Halen, you're gonna be pissed off, right? I mean, if you're not willing to put your money where your mouth is when it comes to the stuff that you write and create, why are you doing a solo thing in the first place?

"I may not be the best singer sometimes," he continues. "I may not be the best performer. But I am one of the best songwriters that there is of this generation. And I will stand by that, whether or not anybody wants to hear it. I've been doing it for 26 years now, and I've had hits with all of my projects, and that track record is something I'm very proud of. It's not one of those things that I'm gonna beat you over the head with; but when I play certain stuff, it's really fun to watch people's eyes light up and go, 'Oh my god — he's playing *this* one, too!'"

With Slipknot, Stone Sour and as a solo artist, Taylor has consistently cultivated a strong and sincere connection with his fans. They cannot get enough of his music or — as immortalized by the What Does Corey Taylor Think? meme — his opinions, and he likewise remains genuinely curious as to their ideas and attitudes. So when we put out a call for *Revolver* readers to ask Taylor their most burning questions, the response was, unsurprisingly, incredible — and he generously and thoughtfully answered on topics ranging from music and sobriety to horror films and the impending zombie apocalypse.

GROOMING: BREANA O'CONNOR

N.W.A
MR
SK

Taylor and late Slipknot bassist Paul Gray, Sydney, Australia, 2008

What is the happiest moment you've ever experienced as a musician? And what was the saddest? — Sara_Eraaa

Obviously, any time we've lost somebody from our tribe has been really, really hard. The day we lost [Slipknot bassist] Paul [Gray], and then the day we found out about [drummer] Joey [Jordison]... Anytime you lose somebody who you were really close with, and you were able to make really great music with, it affects you. Even if that person hasn't been in the band for probably 10 years, it affects you. It breaks your heart because you immediately think about the things that you never got to say to them and wish that you had — and you just have to kind of pray and hope that they knew how you felt.

The happiest moment? I guess it's when you realize that you are viewed as a peer by people you grew up worshipping. Respect is a huge thing for me, and when you receive the respect of people who influenced you and helped make you who you are — and I'm talking about everybody from Alice Cooper to Mike Patton — when those people give you that respect and go out of their way to make sure that you know it, that will make your heart sing more than anything else in the world.

WHAT'S AN ALBUM YOU HATED WHEN YOU FIRST HEARD IT, BUT LOVE NOW? — Doug Hoffman Probably [Metallica's] *St. Anger*. First of all, when it came out, I was a raging alcoholic prick. And when I listened to it the mix kind of threw me off, and I wasn't paying attention to the songs. I was kind of following the herd on that. But then [Stone Sour guitarist] Josh Rand, who was a massive Metallica fan, he got the deluxe version that had the companion DVD where they played the whole album in their rehearsal space. And watching that, I could hone in on the songs. I wasn't stuck on how it sounded. I could listen to what was going on, and it immediately gave me a better appreciation of what it was. So now when I listen to it, I think a lot of the stuff's really good, and there are some good grooves on it that I think are really underappreciated. I mean, that title track is a motherfucker, you know?

IF YOU HAD TO PLAY JUST ONE SLIPKNOT, ONE STONE SOUR AND ONE SOLO SONG FOR SOMEONE WHO'S NEVER HEARD THOSE PROJECTS, WHAT WOULD THOSE SONGS BE? — Able Freeman Oh God, that's a good question. With Slipknot, I'd probably do "Duality," just because it's such a great amalgam of everything that Slipknot does, and it's still to this day one of the biggest songs we have. With Stone Sour, probably "Through Glass" — not just because I wrote it, but because it was such a sleeper song. Like, there were only a handful of people who really believed in that song; and then when it came out, it just exploded like nothing I'd ever seen before. So that's something I'm really proud of. And then for the solo thing, I would probably say "Beyond," because like those other songs, it has elements of everything I'm doing. There's just enough edge there that kind of puts it in that crossroads of hard rock, heavy metal, a little punk, a little stoner; it's just got a little bit of everything, but it's all kind of formed into one great song.

WHAT THREE NON-METAL ALBUMS SHOULD EVERY METALHEAD HAVE IN THEIR COLLECTION? — Greg Linney Let's start with *Confessions of a Knife...* by My Life With the Thrill Kill Kult. Their later stuff was a little edgier, kinda like KMFDM, but that album has got these great kind of industrial-techno vibes to it, while also being super dark. "The Days of Swine & Roses" is one of the greatest songs from that era, and I can't tell you how many nights I would get high as fuck and go dance at the goth clubs to that song. Let's also do *Purple Rain* by Prince. That's one of the most perfect albums ever written, and the fact that it's outlived the movie tells you all you need to know. And just for shits and giggles, let's go with *Trouble* by Ray LaMontagne. That album made me fall in love with playing acoustic again when I first heard it; it drove me right back to the wood and strings, man.

I LOVE YOUR GUEST SPOT ON DAMAGEPLAN'S "FUCK YOU." ANY GOOD DIMEBAG DARRELL STORIES THAT YOU COULD SHARE WITH US? — Neil Pollock Oh my God, dude. [*Laughs*] I can tell you every night with Dimebag always started out the same: You remembered the *beginning* of the night. It was the rest of the night that you had a hard time recalling. And I can tell you he was one of the funniest people I've ever met, and he was just always ready to have a good time. One of my favorite moments was the first time that we actually got to meet Dime and Vinnie [Paul] at the same time, because they came as a pair for the most part. We were playing Deep Ellum Live in Dallas with Slipknot — we were on tour with Coal Chamber — and they came down not only to see them, but to see us, which was massive. We didn't know these guys from Adam, and they immediately came backstage and were like, "We are taking y'all to the Clubhouse!" And I was like, "Ohhh,

THIS AND OPPOSITE PAGES: PAUL HARRIES

Metallica's James Hetfield with Taylor at Download Festival, Glasgow, Scotland, 2004

fuck." [*Laughs*] And it just proceeded to get crazier from there!

I remember Dime playing me demos for what would become Damageplan. I think at the time it was still being called New Found Power. I'm sitting in the back lounge hanging out with him — and dude, I am god-awful wasted — and he grabs my face and goes, "Taylor! Where are you, man? Are you in there?" [*Laughs*] And I just started giggling like an idiot.

For the longest time, I had a voicemail from him saved on my phone. I had recorded my stuff for Damageplan in Des Moines and sent it back so they could mix it in with everything. And he called me and dude, he is just *screaming*, like, "Holy fucking *shit*, man!" He's singing along to the stuff that I ad-libbed on it, and it was one of the best things I've ever heard. I saved it right up until I had to change my phone and I couldn't keep it anymore. But yeah, I could do a whole book about that crazy son of a bitch.

WHAT'S THE WEIRDEST, OR MOST DISTURBING, FAN GIFT YOU EVER RECEIVED, AND WHAT DID YOU DO WITH IT? — Allain Vichey
One of Slipknot's biggest fans in Holland was this guy Crazy White Sean. He was this weird hippie artist-musician dude who just tooled around Amsterdam doing his thing. We were in Amsterdam on Valentine's Day to play a show, and he brought us a real cow heart in a Valentine's box — and it fucking smelled *awful*. Somebody tried to take a bite of it and immediately threw up. I was like, "That's the dumbest thing I've ever seen, and I've been around!" Sean was one of those dudes who was kind of confrontational at first, but once you got past that crazy veneer, he was a sweetheart. He passed about 10 years ago, which was a real bum-out.

IF THE RAGE VIRUS SPREADS OR THE BRAIN FUNGI TAKE OVER, WHAT'S YOUR ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE GAME PLAN?!? — Sammy Digestor Well, it's one of the reasons why I live on a mountain, because I'm fully prepared for that. The first thing you do is make sure that your pantry is good with sundries. There's a Smith's [grocery] less than a mile away from me, and I'll go down with a baseball bat and just make sure everybody's outta my way, gather up everything, get back to the house, get the storm windows boarded up, make sure that we've got plenty of gas in the vehicles if we need to do whatever, and then we just lock down and see what happens. So yeah, trust me; I have a scenario for that. I'm not a doomsday prepper, but I have thought this through!

WHAT, IN YOUR OPINION, IS SLIPKNOT'S MOST OVERRATED SONG? UNDERRATED? — Cal Panko Overrated? I don't know, to be honest. I mean, there's definitely songs that I get sick of singing; I'm very much on the record saying that "Wait and Bleed" is a pain in my fucking ass. I've been singing it for 26 years and it hasn't gotten easier, folks! [*Laughs*] But I still sing it with Slipknot and with my solo project, which tells you how much of a psycho I am, because I know people love that song. So, you gotta do it — and listen, it's a good problem to have. To me, the most underrated Slipknot song is "Danger — Keep Away." I love both versions, the one that's on the album [*Vol. 3: (The Subliminal Verses)*] and the uncut version that eventually came out. There's some beautiful parts to that song.

YOU'VE SAID WATCHING FAITH NO MORE PLAY "EPIC" LIVE ON MTV CHANGED YOUR LIFE. I'VE ALWAYS WONDERED: WHAT SPECIFICALLY WAS IT ABOUT MIKE PATTON? AND WHAT'S YOUR FAVORITE FAITH NO MORE SONG? — Kim Shillingsworth
Mike Patton in 1990 was a man that had no fucks in his pockets, dude. He

The Damned singer Dave Vanian and Taylor, *Kerrang!* Awards, 2018

COURTESY OF COREY TAYLOR

Have you ever had a fanboy moment with an older musician or celeb that you've met? — Dave Shakley

Oh, dude, I have them constantly. The first time I met [the Damned singer] Dave Vanian, I couldn't even look at him. We were at the *Kerrang!* Awards, about five years ago. I look over and holy shit, it's Dave Vanian, and he's there with his wife Patricia [Morrison, former bassist of Sisters of Mercy, the Damned and others]! I'm a *massive* Damned fan, and I accidentally told Michelle Kerr, who was my British head of publicity, that he was over there, and I was freaking out. And she goes, "Oh, hold on!" And she runs over and grabs him and then comes back and grabs me. I probably looked like a blubbering fool, you know? I just was like, "I love you so much!" [*Laughs*] But I got a picture with him, which was rad. I've had so many of those moments in my life. I've been very fortunate. And almost all of the people who I've wanted to meet have been awesome.

Slipknot at the "Duality" music video shoot, Des Moines, Iowa, 2004

Slipknot's *Vol. 3* turns 20 next year. What most stands out when you look back at that recording or time? — Buddy Zepko

Oh God, that was such a pivotal time in my life. I was in such a bad place, I don't really have a lot of memories of the first half of making that album, because I was so fucked up all the time. The thing that sticks out is that there was such a sense of trepidation before the album even came out. We weren't sure if anybody was even gonna dig it, you know? It wasn't until people got a load of "Duality" that everything changed.

We weren't sure if people were gonna be ready for an album like that; we weren't sure if *we* were ready for an album like that. And the recording of it left such a bad taste in my mouth that to this day I have a hard time listening to it. Obviously, a lot of it stems from how I feel about [producer] Rick Rubin — to me, [mixer] Greg Fidelman produced that album, because Rubin wasn't there. He just fucking *wasn't*. And when he was, it's like he couldn't be bothered.

We were definitely in a weird spot because suddenly we weren't just these dudes from Iowa — we were *Slipknot*, and a lot of takers were starting to kind of cling, trying to get their leech hooks into us, and it was a gnarly time. And I remember having writing sessions with Paul [Gray] in his room, and he was struggling with his addictions and whatnot, and there was me trying to get freshly sober...

But then when I look at all the massive songs that were on it, it's crazy. And right now, we're opening with "Prelude 3.0" into "The Blister Exists," which is such a great one-two punch. It makes me kind of look at that album with new eyes, and go, "Maybe we did something right here!" Because at the time, I wasn't completely convinced.

didn't give a fuck about anybody in that audience. He didn't give a fuck about most of the people on that stage. He was a fucking *star*. He looked exactly how I wanted to look. He dressed how I wanted to fucking dress. He sounded how I wanted a singer to sound. He was *in* it, and he was just the antithesis of everything that I'd seen from frontmen. It wasn't like he had a disdain for the audience, but it was certainly like, I'm not gonna fucking pander to you pigs! [*Laughs*]

And [seeing] that, especially in the moment that I was in — I've talked about it in the past — where I had just gotten back from the hospital after having my stomach pumped, because I'd swallowed a bunch of pills because I wanted to die. And I was watching this madman onstage, and I sat up and I suddenly knew what I wanted to do. Because I had all the pieces, you know? I knew I was good at music; I knew I liked writing. I'd been playing for people and doing shows and playing covers, but I just never knew if I wanted to put it all together. And seeing him, he was the missing piece of the puzzle. It was like a bomb went off in my head.

Favorite Faith No More song? I mean, "Midlife Crisis" is genius, but there's something about "The Gentle Art of Making Enemies" that is so good. I don't know if I could pick between those two songs, but those two are definitely my favorites.

I'M IN A BAND AND RECENTLY QUIT DRINKING. I FEEL SO MUCH BETTER — BUT IT'S TOUGH BEING AROUND PEOPLE THAT PARTY. WAS THAT TOUGH FOR YOU? ANY TIPS FOR A YOUNG TOURING MUSICIAN? — Ian C. It's a great question. I was lucky in the fact that there were other people in the band who were sober, so I didn't have to deal with the "fish outta water" thing. I wasn't "program sober," but I knew people who were, so I was able to kind of sit and hang with them. I don't know what your situation was, but I was drinking so much that it became how I viewed life. I didn't know how to handle things sober. I didn't know how to talk to people sober. I didn't know how to deal with my kids sober. I didn't know how to deal with my wife sober. I didn't know how to deal with my band sober.

So, when I quit drinking, I had to relearn living from scratch, and that included socializing and realizing it's like, Oh, I can go out and hang for a bit. And the beautiful thing you realize is, if people get annoying, you just leave; you just split, man. You don't have to stay there. Because you're sober, you have the wits and the means to be able to get back to where you need to go. It's like, once they start to become asshats, I don't have to stick around.

But listen, it takes practice. It also takes being aware of yourself and your boundaries, and what you'll accept and what you'll deal with. If you have wider boundaries, you can hang out and help them get wasted or whatever, and you can also be the helping hand that helps them get back. If you have shorter boundaries, then just know when someone's not going to respect them and then split. But again, it takes practice, it takes self-knowledge, and it takes knowing what's right for you, because it's not the same for everybody. But once you know where your limits are, it'll make it incredibly easy.

WHAT'S THE LAST HORROR MOVIE YOU WATCHED THAT KEPT YOU UP AT NIGHT? — Freddie Gallagher Oh, *Hereditary*. My wife [Alicia] and I saw it about a year after it came out. She and I had just started dating and she goes, "Let's watch a scary movie." We had the house to ourselves, and we put on *Hereditary* — which neither of us had seen before — and it was like, "Oh, fuck off with this movie!" [*Laughs*] It was so, so disturbing to me, man; there's so many moments that were so uncomfortable, it one hundred percent left an impression. Just thinking about it now, I'm like, "Gahhh!" R

PAUL HARRIES

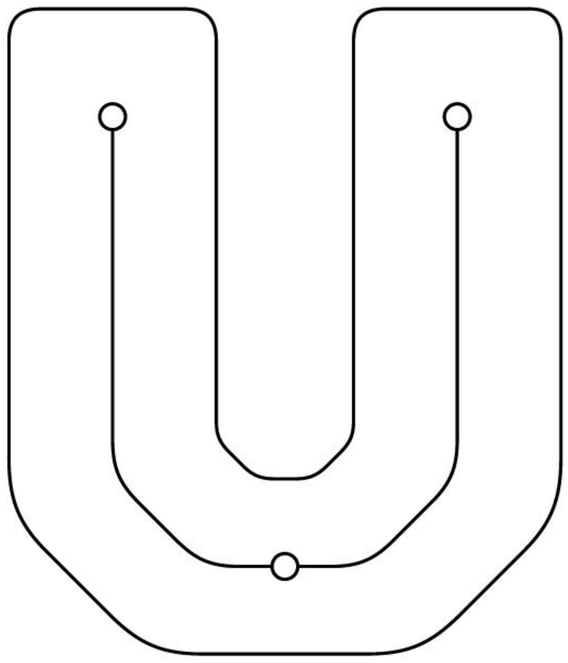
23rd
Street
Lowdown
Bl
DEPARTMENT OF SANITATION

REVOLVER

Revolver follows industrial-metal insurgent **Alexis Mincolla** into the desert to experience the "off-world perspective" that reshaped his creative vision

TEXT
Steve Appleford

PHOTOGRAPHY
Jim Louvau



UNDER A CLEAR BLUE SKY IN THE MOJAVE DESERT, Alexis Mincolla is back behind the wheel, hurtling down a dirt road to treacherous parts unknown. And he's going fast, cranking up Slayer's brutal "Mandatory Suicide" on the stereo while bouncing his truck over crevices and gravel, past Joshua trees and dry brush, leaving behind a cloud of dust in the blistering summer heat.

In the rearview mirror are road signs with bullet holes, but Mincolla looks perfectly relaxed. This is home now for the singer and mastermind behind 3TEETH, the supercharged industrial-metal band from Los Angeles. The city he's left behind is at least two hours away, but it seems more like a thousand miles from the cab of this customized truck, roaring through the high desert on 35-inch tires, with satellite GPS, floodlights, recovery gear, tools, first aid, a tent, and room for a survivalist's supply of water, beer and fuel. Mincolla is fully prepared for the apocalypse, or a party in the wasteland.

"It's a place you don't even make plans," he says of the terrain. "You're like, yeah, we'll just do something — get a bunch of ammo and beers and steaks and camp out somewhere and have a vibe, you know? It's almost like the environment informed a new aspect of my psychology. Every time I go back [to the city], I feel like I'm going back into a cage. There's such a freedom out here."

When I last met up with Mincolla in 2019, the band's third album, *Metawar*, was about to be released, and he was busy preparing the rollout from his Hollywood apartment. He was living a kind of elegant, Gothic existence then, with historic artifacts and paintings on the walls, and a real human skull of unknown origin gifted to him by his friend, guitarist Adam Jones of Tool. Mincolla was a city dweller in black leather, with a dark Italian mustache and boots laced up to his kneecaps.

Then came COVID-19 and the costly cancellation of the band's 2020 U.S. tour behind *Metawar*. Everything stopped. And amid the waves of panic and quarantine, things began to feel claustrophobic in L.A. "People were doing jumping jacks outside their apartments, like a prison yard workout," Mincolla recalls. "I was like, 'This is crazy. We gotta get out of here.'"

The band's label, Century Media Records, was talked into renting a house in the far-out desert community of Joshua Tree for 3TEETH's five band members, including guitarist Chase Brawner, keyboardist Xavier Swafford, bassist Andrew Means and drummer Nick Rossi. The idea was to make use of their unscheduled pandemic downtime and begin work on a new album. The ultimate result was this year's highly anticipated *EndEx*, a collection of 12 calamitous tunes — fueled on big ideas, grinding industrial metal, and moments of subversive melody — that deliver 3TEETH to the front end of a revitalized industrial-metal movement, continuing a story propelled through the decades by the tectonic sounds of Ministry, Skinny Puppy and Rammstein. The album's cryptic title is military jargon for "end of exercise," suggesting one chapter ending and a possible turning point for the band.

With the album completed, most of 3TEETH eventually wandered back to the big city, but Mincolla stayed behind. Now he's gone full desert rat. His beard is grown out, and he's dressed like a next-generation *Mad Max*, ready for the Thunderdome in desert camo pants tucked into brown combat boots, a camo cap with a Chevy logo and wraparound shades. As a totem to his musical roots, he's also wearing a faded Morbid Angel T-shirt, with cutoff sleeves revealing tattooed arms covered with interplanetary scenes, ancient Egyptian figures and geometric symbols.

He spent his weekends here customizing his Chevy Silverado Trail Boss, preparing it for speed and survival. A big step up from his old Chevy Tahoe SUV, the new truck opened up the map to him, sending him deep into the Mojave where there are no roads or cell phone towers. "I didn't go full doomer on it," he says. "I'm still pretty optimistic, but I think we all learned during COVID how fast and weird things can go sideways. A lot of us learned not only the importance of self-reliance, but also how the further you are from the power structures, the more likely you are just to die."

That blunt assessment will be recognizable to fans of 3TEETH, a band known for their fascination with history and culture on the cutting edge of doom, of imperialism and the corporate mentality. The new songs remain dense with content and meaning. The brutal "Xenogenesis" opens *EndEx* amid smoky, ominous effects and an encroaching beat, as Mincolla sings of heritage and biology. More mantra than song, the chorus erupts with Mincolla's industrial-powered shriek: "Searching through my insides/Tearing up my past lives/I was never yours to create!"

While the album's tracking order moved around, "Xenogenesis" was always set as the first, to establish a threatening, ultra-heavy tone. "Xenogenesis is a concept of biology where an organism can be born without any relation to its parent," Mincolla explains. "It's this idea that we can sort of break our psychic scars of the generations past as we move forward and start anew."

That could easily describe the place that Mincolla now finds himself as a newly minted desert denizen. Most of the belongings from his city life are in storage now, as he moves from one Airbnb house rental to another in and around Joshua Tree, embracing the freedom and inspiration he's discovered there. For the singer and the rest of 3TEETH, the gorgeous, unforgiving environment offered all the inspiration they needed.

> "After doing LSD and hiking, there was a clear idea: I didn't want to make a record that felt sociopolitical. I wanted a big wide-angle perspective — some weirder, more cryptic storytelling."
> — Alexis Mincolla

"At some point, after doing enough LSD and hiking and getting into the zone, there was a very clear idea," says Mincolla, known to many friends and admirers as Lex. "I didn't want to make a record that felt so sociopolitical anymore. Coming out here, I really felt like we were getting an off-world perspective, looking back at earth. So I wanted to do a big wide-angle perspective on everything. That allowed us to create some weirder, slightly more cryptic allegorical storytelling."

He's got a friend who sometimes stays with him, a former Marine with years of combat experience. He's noted Mincolla's new lifestyle and told him: "I feel like I'm a redneck masquerading as intellectual, and you're like an intellectual masquerading as a redneck."

"I think a lot," the singer explains. "It's hard to turn it off. I'm not sure that has brought me a ton of happiness per se. So I'm trying to enjoy a little bit more and turn off a little bit and actually soak in nature more. I don't think I abandoned being who I was. I just don't think that metropolitan areas serve me as much anymore in this life."

Back at the house he rents in Joshua Tree, he's got a scorpion in a small plastic habitat. Mincolla bought the nasty-looking Asian forest scorpion (*Heterometrus spinifer*) to cameo in 3TEETH's video for the new album's "Scorpion." It cost $30 at a local desert pet store, where the singer was briefly interrogated by the dude behind the counter. "He's like, 'What do you want it for? You gonna let it sting you?' I'm like, 'No,'" Mincolla recalls. "Then he's like, 'I let him sting me sometimes.' And I'm like, 'I don't really want to get into this.'"

The scorpion hasn't been named yet, but Mincolla has decided to keep it. He sometimes watches as the creature feeds off the grasshoppers jumping amid the woodchips in its cage. The scorpion is venomous but not deadly to humans. "He's definitely a monster more than a pet," he says, describing how it will sting its insect prey, then decapitate and slowly devour the insides with its mandible claws. "I did hold him once and I could just tell he wanted to kill me."

There were fewer predatory arachnids where Mincolla grew up in Boston, surrounded by a wide variety of music, including the kaleidoscopic jazz fusion of the Mahavishnu Orchestra records his dad played at home. His father is an author and practitioner of holistic health (associated with Deepak Chopra), and a sometime musician. But Mincolla owes his early taste for extreme music to his older brother, a devoted '90s metalhead who exposed Lex to death metal at 11 years old. "My brother was the type of dude who would make it *more* scary for me," he says with a laugh. "It's almost like you have to go through the scary thing to be like, 'Actually I *like* this.' And then it becomes your suit of armor."

That early Nineties era was still feeling the effects from the previous decade's full-blown Satanic panic and Tipper Gore's PMRC morality crusade — and public fear and loathing was still very much directed at metal as the genre continued to rise on the charts and receive heavy MTV rotation. Christian activists regularly picketed outside concerts, and daytime TV talk shows alarmed viewers with stories of kids lost to the spell of demonic rock stars and hidden messages. Even hippie parents who came of age in the years of "Sympathy for the Devil" and "Voodoo Child" were concerned.

"I remember my mom finding my older brother's Slayer *South of Heaven* cassette tape. If your parents find the lyrics of 'Mandatory Suicide,' they're genuinely scared," Mincolla says now. "For us it was, 'This is dope! This sounds awesome!' But for a parent looking in, it was potentially something scary. There were definitely some cassettes that were thrown out."

He graduated to industrial music after hearing his brother's copy of Nine Inch Nails' 1994 classic *The Downward Spiral*. While his brother played in some metal bands, Mincolla never considered life as a musician, and instead got into visual art. He studied political science in Rome, and found his way to Miami and New York before landing in Los Angeles, already a vibrant setting for sounds loud and industrial. He dove into that scene as a fan, and created his own underground party there called Lil Death, gathering hordes of "Techno Pagan Party People," as its Facebook page declared.

3TEETH was born after Mincolla met Swafford at Lil Death, a spontaneous reaction to their shared excitement at the scene swirling around them there, and at groundbreaking L.A. clubs like Das Bunker and The Complex. The idea of recording their 2014 self-titled debut was less a career move than about the simple desire to have it as a personal accomplishment. It turned out there was a hunger for the album, which hit No. 8 on the iTunes Electronic Music Chart.

"At the time that we came up, there was a resurgence of a scene and a lot of cool bands. I feel very blessed to have been part of even that small moment," he says. "We're still an L.A. band. We'll go back and rehearse there. I remember writing the first album's lyrics on the Red Line [train] going from Hollywood to downtown. It definitely informed a lot of what we do, and we will always have to pay homage to it."

3TEETH were still a new band known mostly to hardcore industrial fanatics when they were recruited to tour in support of Tool in 2016 and, later, Rammstein and Danzig. Mincolla got used to playing bigger rooms. The band's reach expanded further with the album <*shutdown.exe*> in 2017, received then like the second coming of classic industrial metal. And in 2019 3TEETH dropped their first for Century Media, *Metawar*, and prepared to spread their message deeper to the masses with a fully realized manifesto of techno-horror, Chase Brawner's vicious riffs and Mincolla's socio-political fact-based paranoia. That trajectory was interrupted by COVID, as it was for the entire music industry, but Mincolla says now that he's grateful for the "serendipity" of the pause in momentum, which led to his unexpected arrival in the desert.

OPPOSITE PAGE: STEVE APPLEFORD

"That was the weird sort of left-handed blessing of COVID. I think it forced a lot of people to have to do a little bit more inward work. It uninstalled a lot of bullshit," he says. "It obviously created a lot of extreme trauma for people having to deal with that stuff. But I think that maybe wasn't the worst thing for people in the long run." He pauses, then adds, "But that's a tough perspective."

The new *EndEx* was recorded in and around Joshua Tree and the high desert, which has a long legacy of loud music. There are several studios built in homes nearby, including Rancho de La Luna, which has hosted sessions with Josh Homme, Dave Grohl and Iggy Pop, among many others. The album was partially recorded at the home studio of producer Nick Rowe, just up the street from Mincolla's place. All of the vocals were tracked there. Guests and collaborators on the album included H09909 (on the chilling "Paralyze") and acclaimed video game soundtrack composer Mick Gordon (known for *Doom: Eternal*, *Wolfenstein II*) as a producer and player.

The hard-hitting "Slum Planet" is all crushing beats and noise, as Mincolla describes the planet as a real-life dystopia, owned and marketed by the usual corporate interests. The singer sounds almost giddy reciting a grim sales pitch: "I don't care if you live or you die/ As long as you're willing to buy!" In the accompanying music video, Mincolla is in the cockpit of a spiky alien aircraft, soaring over a sickening urban wasteland, keeping watch over what's left of life on earth.

There's also "Acme Death Machine," a title in part a playful echo of the old Looney Tunes cartoons, where the gadgets used by Wile E. Coyote in his mission to kill the Road Runner were always bought under the same Acme brand name. The music is punishing and relentless, as Mincolla explores the idea that corporate America is hazardous to our health.

"I feel like every day there's a new product that's banned because they find out it's giving you cancer," Mincolla says with a grin. "At some point do we realize that our food supplies are just poisoned? Is everything that we do killing us in some way or another?"

The sound of 3TEETH also expanded with "What's Left," a notably slippery, danceable track layered with Mincolla's panicked growls and whispers, set to a machine-gun beat and a fuzzy, frantic Gordon bassline. He describes it as "almost industrial surf rock," partly inspired by a picture hanging in the studio of surfers wearing hazmat suits.

The album closes with a cover of "Everybody Wants to Rule the World," originally recorded by '80s synth-pop band Tears for Fears and a major hit around the world. Turning up-tempo pop hooks inside out as something more ominous has been a 3TEETH specialty. On *Metawar*, the band transformed indie-pop outfit Foster the People's bouncy international megahit "Pumped Up Kicks" — with its startling lyrics exploring the mind of a school shooter — into something scarier that cut much closer to the bone of the song's meaning.

For Mincolla, the Tears for Fears tune — the title alone which spoke to the singer's bleak view of international power struggles — was overdue for industrial

THIS AND OPPOSITE PAGE: STEVE APPLEFORD

"Adam Jones always told me: 'You have to chew glass for it.' It's never going to be easy. And if it's worth doing, it's worth suffering for."
— Mincolla

reinterpretation. 3TEETH turn it into something menacing but understated, with overlapping beats and effects creating a shadowy new context for the original's bright melody. "It seemed like the right time for that, as we sort of nosedive into World War III," he explains. "I had a harder time with this cover, because of how much we all liked the original. We almost scrapped it and then one day we figured it out and we're like, 'Ooh, this is awesome.'"

The ideas and songs piled up, to the point that organizing a coherent album seemed like an impossible task — until everything finally came into focus, both creatively and personally, for Mincolla. "Somehow by the end of it, when it's all organized and put together, it helps me realize things about *me*," Mincolla says. "It's almost like you can't see the forest for the trees, but when you finally get a bird's-eye view, it's like getting a clear perspective in your own brain. And you're like, Oh, *that's* what I was going through for three years."

Leading up to the album release, the band shared clues to the new sounds and visions through a series of singles and dynamic music videos: "Paralyze," "Merchant of the Void," "Slum Planet," "Scorpion" and "Drift." While the *EndEx* videos are not big-budget productions, and usually created while rushing toward a release deadline, they represent an essential visual side to the 3TEETH mission. They are nightmarish short films of crushing, industrial-strength rage and anxiety, and unfold as cautionary tales of the virtual and flesh-and-bone.

"It's an opportunity to add another dimension to what we do," the frontman says. "I've always thought that 3TEETH is an art project built on the chassis of a band. So the band is in many ways just a vehicle, a reason to make more art."

In that, he's learned from the example of his friend Adam Jones, who not only crafts Tool's epic, growling guitar riffs, but as a filmmaker created the band's groundbreaking early music videos. Those productions benefitted from the expertise Jones learned as a Hollywood special effects artist (*Jurassic Park*, *Terminator 2*) in the years before Tool fully took off. Now that he's relocated to the desert, Mincolla sees Jones less often, but the guitarist's influence still reverberates.

"Adam in many ways is forever my mentor," Mincolla explains of their conversations about art and life within a creatively ambitious metal band. "This is a guy that always told me: 'You have to chew glass for it,' basically saying it's never going to be easy. And if it's worth doing, it's worth suffering for it, and it's worth struggling for it. That dude is forever a hardworking tortured artist, despite the level of success."

IT'S LATE AFTERNOON, AND THE SUN IS BEGINNING to slip behind the mountains when Mincolla steers his souped-up Chevy Trail Boss from the highway and onto a bumpy dirt path leading to a place called Giant Rock. It's located on federal Bureau of Land Management property in Landers, California. At its center is a gigantic boulder about seven stories tall, a regular gathering place for off-roaders.

Nearby is the rotting husk of an abandoned car. Whatever it was in the past is unrecognizable now. It

3TEETH, (from left) Chase Brawner, Nick Rossi, Mincolla, Andrew Means and Xavier Swafford

seems to be upside down. Giant Rock is also known as a spiritual meeting place, a landing zone for UFOs. Early the last century, a peculiar German miner named Frank Critzer dug a cave beneath the boulder and built a 400-square-foot home there. When the feds came knocking in 1942, he blew himself up with dynamite under mysterious circumstances. His friend, George Van Tassel, followed in his place, telling stories of alien encounters in the desert, and for 20 years hosted the annual Giant Rock Interplanetary Spacecraft Convention here for true believers.

Mincolla rolls up to the boulder and a crowd of hot-rodded buggies and trucks. Some are spinning their wheels in the sand, sending up huge clouds of dust. He admires one of the newer trucks, a limited-edition Ford he notes probably cost $130,000. "He could have bought a Ferrari. That thing is fucking crazy," he says admiringly.

He leans out the window and shouts to the driver, "Is that a Raptor R?"

The guy laughs. "Yes."

"I could tell from that supercharged whine, dude. Damn, I've never seen one. That's fucking sick. Nice fucking truck. Very good, bro."

A few minutes later, Mincolla is rolling through the dirt again, with ATVs ripping past on one side, trucks on the other. He spins his truck around and hits the gas, racing against another vehicle back toward Giant Rock, bouncing hard over the earth. The adrenaline is at full boil, but it's not always like this, he says. On other visits, he'll just as likely come up here with a couple of folding chairs, with a book or some firearms, to drink from cold cans of IPA and take in the sunset.

"I climb out here sometimes, do some bouldering," he says. "It's awesome."

As the dusk finally turns to dark, Mincolla heads back toward home, ripping down the dirt track, with only the floodlights on his truck to guide him. Back on the paved road, he pulls over at a cantina called the Giant Rock Meeting Room.

The tattooed redhead behind the bar brings us each a shot of artisan Mexican tequila and bottles of Modelo. A small pizza is on the way. On the patio is a birthday party being serenaded by a band playing Led Zeppelin. "Damn," says Mincolla with a smile, "we got 'Dancing Days,' bro?"

It's just another night in Mincolla's new life in the desert. Now that he's in what he calls "my feral 40s," the experience continues to refuel him, delivering new ideas and experiences, and it's fed into his work with 3TEETH. There will be a couple of big shows this fall in Los Angeles and New York, but the band will let the album sink in for a bit before touring hard in 2024.

He remains committed to making the most of that.

"The fact that it's gotten this far is like, yeah, we should still bleed for it," he says. "We should still chew glass for it and ride it out. And whether or not this is the last record, you should still just give it your all or not do it at all. There's nothing worse than being half-in on something."

NEW MUSIC FROM CENTURY MEDIA RECORDS!

LUMINESCENT BRIDGE

A MAXI SINGLE TO TRANSPORT YOU TO THE ABYSSAL DEPTHS, WITH A NEW CRUSHING DEATH METAL TRACK AND AN EVEN MORE IN-DEPTH AMBIENT COMPOSITION

DAEMONIC RITES

THE MIGHTY MAYHEM RETURN WITH A LIVE ALBUM CAPTURING THE RITES AND RITUAL OF THEIR 'DAEMON' WORLD TOUR

MEMENTO MORI

MARDUK RETURN, BOLDER THAN EVER, TO SPREAD THE GOSPEL OF DEATH AND THE DEVIL UPON THIS WORLD!

GHOST AT THE GALLOWS

A DIVERSE AND DYNAMIC MUSICAL EXPERIENCE RANGING FROM MOURNFUL, SOUTHERN-TINGED ACOUSTIC PASSAGES, ALL THE WAY TO AGGRESSIVE SPEED METAL ASSAULTS… AND EVERYTHING IN BETWEEN.

AMONGST THE LOW & EMPTY

SIGNS OF THE SWARM PRESENT A NEW LEVEL OF DEATHCORE BLEAKNESS - THE SOUND OF ART PUSHED TO THE EXTREME

GET EXCLUSIVE MUSIC & MERCH @ CENTURYMEDIA.STORE

BAIRD

TWENTY YEARS IN, THE PROG-SLUDGE TRAILBLAZERS DISCOVERED A NEW “WIDE-OPEN ROAD.” TO GET THERE, **JOHN BAIZLEY** HAD

ONESS

TO FACE HIS NIGHTMARES AND COMMUNE WITH THE DEAD. TEXT **GREGORY ADAMS** PHOTOGRAPHY **NYC TINTYPE/J BORUCKI**

Baroness, (from left) Gina Gleason, John Baizley, Nick Jost and Sebastian Thomson

JOHN BAIZLEY'S SUBCONSCIOUS IS A WATERY ABYSS,

AND EACH NIGHT IT THREATENS TO PULL HIM UNDER.

For years, the Baroness singer-guitarist has been plagued by nightmares about drowning in "deeply red water" under a "deeply red sun" — a suffocating experience that he's recently brought to the surface on "Anodyne," a sludge-thick rocker from his group's bold new album *STONE*. In it, Baizley sings of being held underwater; before he and co-guitarist Gina Gleason harmonize the beautiful, unsettlingly line, "In my dreams, we're gonna fall forever."

"I would be in this canoe in the middle of a lake … following [Baroness drummer] Sebastian [Thomson]," Baizley tells *Revolver* of one recurring dream. "My boat would go under the water, and I would drown for two or three hours. That's not a pleasant dream to have, but I was having it so frequently that I was like, Well, something is clearly forcing me to have this reoccurring experience."

Baizley has theories around the meanings of these dreams, but he's keeping them close to the chest. That said, an outsider could speculate they're perhaps an outgrowth of the terrifying 2012 bus crash Baroness experienced during a European tour, where their vehicle fell off a viaduct. Baizley, who founded Baroness in 2003, is the only member from this era still in the band, and he still contends with chronic pain from breaking his left arm and left leg more than a decade ago. In a more positive light, that he is following Thomson's lead in the dream could speak to the fact that Baizley's bond with his bandmates is sturdier than ever before. "Stone is something you think of as strong as hell," Gleason says when asked about the album title, over a separate phone call with *Revolver*. "Hopefully that's a good metaphor for us moving forward: strong as hell; not going anywhere."

Sure enough, Baroness have embodied artistic adventurousness and resilience these past 20 years. That has earned them consistent critical praise, a fiercely loyal fanbase, a Grammy nomination and endorsements from heroes including Metallica and Deftones. As Baroness broach their third decade of activity, they've likewise become a model for longevity and uncompromising creativity to a new class of heavy bands. Baroness will be paying it forward during this fall's Sweet Oblivion Tour, on which they'll be showcasing a slew of genre-pushing upstarts as openers: Jesus Piece, Portrayal of Guilt, Soul Glo, Escuela Grind and more. *STONE* likewise marks Baroness' next daring chapter of reinvention.

Thematically, their sixth full-length is a cathartic testament to both fearless self-reflection and the importance of strengthening bonds. Sonically, the album is a nexus point of hammer-down heavy metal, progressive weirdness, hickory-scented Americana, and a newfound improvisational spirit that demonstrates the band's willingness to venture far off familiar pathways. For Baizley and Co., who you travel with along the way makes all the difference.

It's also worth noting that *STONE* marks the first point in the band's history where they have recorded back-to-back albums with the same lineup — and clearly, something's clicking with this current iteration (which Baizley counts as Baroness' seventh). Thomson and bassist Nick Jost first jumped onboard for 2015's *Purple*. Gleason was the last to join, in 2017, and six years on from first jamming in Baizley's basement to test out a guitar pedal, Gleason and the Baroness leader are fairly inseparable. Both musicians currently live in Philadelphia (Baroness' rhythm section are stationed in Brooklyn, New York) and they're regularly running into each other at the gym, walking their dogs together, checking out basement shows and sharing meals in Baizley's high-ceilinged dining room; the same place where Gleason tracked the feverish, Randy Rhoads-inspired guitar solo for *STONE*'s "Last Word" (which is the first entirely improvised lead in the band's discography). That close-knit connection was tested during the start of the pandemic.

When the tour cycle behind 2019's *Gold & Grey* was put on hold at the outset of lockdowns, the members of Baroness stayed distanced and transitioned to woodshedding song ideas via a communal Dropbox folder. They'd hold weekly Zoom meetings to plot their next steps. Baizley kept returning to the idea of the band making their "cabin-in-the-woods record." Once it was safe to meet up, they were set on writing, rehearsing and recording on the outskirts of society. Eventually, they settled for an Airbnb in Barryville, New York, a quaint hamlet on the boarder of Pennsylvania. Beyond a general store, and a motel where they tried to get tacos, there wasn't much to see or do other than crush out a metal record. It was perfect, not to mention practical. "The idea of being in the woods is romantic, but there's an efficiency thing to it too," Gleason says, adding of cranking it up in the sticks, "We can't be botherin' neighbors!"

As they hunkered down to record in their temporary rural abode, Thomson set up his drums in front of a stone fireplace. The ensuing 13-hour marathon jams

were an outgrowth of the *Gold & Grey* tour, on which the band loosened up and extended live versions well past their recorded counterparts. The largely improvised "Choir" (which connects full-bore rocker "Beneath the Rose" with the beautiful organ-and-vocal lamentation "The Dirge") is Baroness at their most open-ended: Its lean guitar ambiance spirals around the kind of hypnotic, motoric groove Thomson also locks in with as part of Trans Am, the long-running post-rock outfit he co-founded in the early Nineties. Baizley's stream-of-conscious, spoken-word sermonizing on "Choir" — which hovers between a Southern yowl and a crypt keeper's croak — signals another turning point for the project, though his words were actually less free-flowing in Barryville than the music. He explains that writer's block gripped him hard at the time. To be fair, he was also performing and engineering the sessions, so his plate was pretty full. Still, the recordings sat without vocals for months.

Back at home in Philadelphia, Baizley cleared his mental cobwebs by walking out of his neighborhood and into nearby Laurel Hill Cemetery. It's there that the musician gained clarity, and ultimately a thematic anchor for *STONE*. "It's one of these gorgeous, full cemeteries filled with mausoleums," he explains of the setting. "It's a beautiful place to take a walk [and] receive some wisdom from the peace and quiet of your surroundings."

The statues Baizley saw in Laurel Hill became muses, on many fronts. While Baroness' in-house painter-illustrator previously sought out live models to pose for the ornate scenes of earlier album covers, this time he was struck by the inanimate, inflexible beauty of those stone figures. He drew three for *STONE*'s cover.

More broadly, the monuments reminded him of the permanence of death, as well as the legacy of family. Oddly enough, one day Baizley and his wife realized that a direct, but previously unknown, relative laid in Laurel Hill. "She saw a mausoleum that had 'Baizley' on it. It's a fairly uncommon name, so we looked into it and it's a great-great-great-to-whatever-power grandfather [of mine]," he explains, before sadly adding of a more recent connection to the grounds: "Unfortunately in the interim between the past records, I've lost a few friends. [One of them] had a ceremony in that same cemetery."

Baizley's careful not to spell out everything for his listeners, but death and darkness are indelibly etched in *STONE*. The record draws out scenes of drownings, burials and the foreboding feeling that time is running out. That said, the album contrasts this with some of Baroness' most uplifting metal melodies yet. Death also inadvertently birthed "The Dirge," with Gleason explaining that the passing of a family member led to Baroness' acquisition of a slightly decrepit, yet still functional, vintage organ. She and Baizley picked up the instrument on their way back from Barryville, and

THIS AND OPPOSITE PAGE: JIMMY HUBBARD

"Drowning for two or three hours is not a pleasant dream. But I was having it so frequently that I was like, Well, something is clearly forcing me to have this reoccurring experience."
— John Baizley

drug it into the latter's basement to work out a tender melody and vocals. Though Baizley's vocal cords were mostly dormant in Barryville, he and his co-vocalist blossomed in the basement.

"I feel like John and I became closer friends this time around, because it was an even more intense vocal period," Gleason recalls of laying down harmonies at her bandmate's home. "You're completely vulnerable: 'I'm just going to sing in this microphone, and you're going to hear me say the most wack ideas you've ever heard … to see if anything stands out.'"

Though *STONE* features some hallmarks of Baroness' sound — namely colossal riff-play and soaring, anthemic vocals — it's likewise a huge step forward for the group. The improv spirit is a big part of that, but aesthetically the band have also moved beyond the color-coded concept that guided everything between 2007's *Red Album* and 2019's *Gold & Grey*. In retrospect, Baizley muses that Baroness' color studies were somewhat of a gimmick, but nevertheless explains it was daunting to leave that connective aesthetic behind.

"I personally went back and forth about a million times … on whether or not we would go back on what we said and continue with some kind of chromatic titling thing," Baizley admits, before clarifying that he's now confident in his decision and excited about where Baroness could be headed next. While nothing's set in stone, he's conceptualizing another multi-album arc that could feature a fully improvised outing or an all-acoustic venture. "A wide-open road," is how Baizley describes the path they paved with *STONE*. "We really felt like we clearly and definitively stepped over that line; this is a new era for the band."

Complexity has marked much of Baroness' career. Of course, there's the densely crafted soundscapes and meter-shifting prog-pivots of their music. Behind the scenes, it's been an emotional minefield of near-death experiences and interpersonal shake-ups. Hell, this also applies to the wondrously elaborate linework Baizley brings to each album cover. While he dubs *STONE* the band's "most minimalist record," it's nevertheless layered with intricate ideas and subtext. "I'm good at complicating my life, and the lives of those around me," he says. "I have a real knack for it."

As a fitting counterpoint to that sentiment, *STONE* begins with a few lithe acoustic strums between Baizley and Gleason, their voices harmonizing to ponder the prospect of leading "a simple life." It's a serene-enough reflection — but is that dream even possible when you're part of a hardworking, hard-traveling metal band?

"I'm questioning what that means, and if it's something that I want," Baizley offers. "Even though I, at times, yearn for that simple life, I don't think I've found it yet. Life still feels very complicated and chaotic, turbulent and busy … I don't necessarily mean that in a bad way."

Wargasm

Milkie Way and Sam Matlock share the personal stories behind the things they love

TEXT **Gregory Adams** PHOTOGRAPHY **Jessica-Rose Lena**

WARGASM STAY TRUE TO THEIR WORD, NO MATTER the consequence. On "Do It So Good," the first single from the U.K. electro-punk duo's full-length debut, *Venom*, vocalist-bassist Milkie Way snarls out her and vocalist-guitarist Sam Matlock's sinister intent as they rise through the ranks of heavy music: "We came for blood." Between the pair's attitude-heavy screams, in-song comparisons to fierce pop-culture figures like Madonna and *The Terminator*'s Sarah Connor, and a musical bedrock of hard-blitzed house beats and nu-metal swagger, Wargasm make a pretty compelling case that they aren't to be fucked with.

"I don't like confrontation, but I feel a bit fight-y these days," Way tells *Revolver*, noting that "Do It So Good" is a warning shot to shit-talkers and copycats. "People say things that make me feel a lot of ways in my brain; someday it might be acted out on. We'll see."

The threat of danger is nevertheless part of Wargasm's undeniable appeal, with the duo's IDGAF sound and vision attracting a whole bunch of attention at the moment. There's lots of love coming from nu-metal icons including Jonathan Davis, Corey Taylor and Fred Durst (the latter two have both handpicked Wargasm to open their tours). There's also the new generation Matlock describes as the "fuck-loads of incredibly dressed, immaculate people jumping over each other" at Wargasm's riot-ready live shows.

"I wear kneepads for a reason," Way says, laughing. "I've been onstage with bleeding knees, or a bloody face. I often get a mic to the face, self-inflicted. Sometimes I'll come back with a fuckin' broken rib." Fittingly, *Venom* is the pair's most bruising statement yet.

Wargasm formed in 2018. Way was a model and photographer that had moved to London from Northern Ireland. Matlock was in the buzzy band Dead!, and the pair met after Way shot one of their sets. After Dead! broke up, Matlock slid into Way's DMs and invited her to his flat to hear some songs he'd been writing. She told Matlock that his demos were "shit," but as they bonded over art and music they "clicked very quickly," and Wargasm was born. The two have been inseparable since. "We live together and we go on tour," says Way. "So, we're a bit of an organism at this point."

Starting with 2019's "Post Modern Rhapsody" single, and onto last year's acclaimed debut EP *EXPLICIT: The MiXXXtape*, the duo has needled into a freakish fusion of dayglow breakbeats and decadently detuned grooves. *Venom* takes things to new extremes, with Way and Matlock's latest hybrid theory juxtaposing stronger melodic hooks with even more acid-corroded metal mania. Further ratcheting up the insanity, Limp Bizkit's Fred Durst even drops a guest verse on *Venom*'s neck-breaking party anthem, "Bang Ya Head."

On *Venom* standout "Death Rattle" — which is driven by a sample of Björk's industrially bombastic "Army of Me" and amped-up for the 2020s with vicious backend breakdowns — Wargasm explore a hypothetical scenario about being at a party during a doomsday event and hoping your nearest "fuck-buddy" is a good fit. ("Choose wisely!" says Way.) Having already survived the pandemic together, Wargasm's duo are clearly locked into a good thing. And while they're often whipping up the pits, they aren't afraid to enjoy life's simple pleasures. With that in mind, after a quick stop at the pub, Way and Matlock invited *Revolver* back to their flat to show off some of their favorite things.

MILKIE WAY This isn't near where we live. It's in Soho ... but I'll drink an Estrella there.
SAM MATLOCK It's at the bottom of Berwick Street, which used to be a famous market before it got mad gentrified. It's not our "local," but one of the things you get by being a Londoner is that going to the pub is important. It might seem like a trivial thing, but taking that half-an-hour to sit and have a nice pint that slightly dulls one's senses is exceptional for creativity. It gives you a brief disconnect from life. Pubs are a beautiful place to take respite with friends. Instead of just staring at the screen all day, you can just pop into the pub and chat about something completely un-music related.

FAVORITE SOHO PUB
* The Blue Posts

FAVORITE APOCALYPSE-READY PHYSICAL MEDIA

*** DVDs**

MATLOCK It's the tangible thing: There's something about taking it out of the sleeve, or having a little look at your DVD shelf like, "What should we watch tonight," instead of clicking on this thing where you can watch anything. And when the internet goes down — when the bombs start dropping and the Wi-Fi's the first thing to go — what the fuck are you going to do? We're going to sit here and watch our movies and have a great time!

WAY I like horror. Sam likes sci-fi and action. We've also got a lot of concert DVDs, which was good during the lockdown. You couldn't go to gigs, so the next best thing was watching them on your TV. "Tonight we're going to watch Jeff Buckley, and then fucking Iron Maiden, back-to-back."

FAVORITE HEAVY-METAL FOOTWEAR
*** Reeboks**

MATLOCK When Iron Maiden got Bruce Dickinson and Adrian Smith back for [2000's] *Brave New World*, they still kept [guitarist] Janick Gers in the band. He wore those Reeboks; so when I was younger, I wore those. No offense to Doc Martens, but I don't like them. They're not comfortable. The Reebok high-top is a beautiful shoe. They look good, mate! And they're a part of metal: Go Google Metallica or Megadeth with "sneakerheads." Nothing looks cooler than a trashed pair of white trainers.

FAVORITE MUSIC REVOLUTIONARY
*** Wendy O. Williams**

WAY Wendy O. Williams is my number one muse/icon/queen, music-wise. That Plasmatics record [*Coup d'État*] was a gift from Ian, our manager. Everything Wendy did was revolutionary. She was the blueprint. Running around onstage in this bikini and her Reeboks, she looked and sounded so fucking good — and really didn't give a fuck in the most visceral way.

FAVORITE JEWELRY DESIGNER
*** Anine Irdem**

WAY This piece is made by my good friend Anine Irdem. I hit her up before the Heavy Music Awards, about two years ago, after I saw she had this bodice top made out of crosses that strategically covered the nipples. I wore the same top and a matching skirt for the *EXPLICIT* artwork. I wear her cross on my neck every day. Northern Ireland's a pretty staunchly religious place, but I learned pretty early that I was non-religious. So, I guess it's partly subversion [to wear the cross]. Maybe the only good thing about religion is that the aesthetics are strong. Churches look fucking gorgeous! They sure know how to fucking brand.

FAVORITE NWOBHM OBSESSION
*** Iron Maiden**

MATLOCK When I was 15 or 16, I saw Iron Maiden [on the 2006] *A Matter of Life and Death* album cycle, and it changed everything for me — these widdily harmonic guitars jumping into baroque-esque [melodies]. And as a nerd and a fan of all things sci-fi and fantasy, Eddie's the perfect mascot. I got an art book of Derek Riggs, the guy who created Eddie. The first painting of Eddie [*which became the cover of Iron Maiden's self-titled debut*] was originally titled "Electric Matthew Says Hello," because he wanted to make a zombie that looked like he'd been plugged into some electricity. I've got a little tatty on my leg [based on it]. It was at Bloodstock festival. Someone started slagging off Iron Maiden, so I was like, "Right, fuck you … I'm going to play a set and then get a fucking Iron Maiden tattoo. That'll teach you!"

FAVORITE POP-STAR SWAG

*** Prince Jacket**

WAY I got that on eBay, which is my favorite place to shop. The [seller] ended up bringing the jacket over to the apartment. I was expecting it to be this old music head kind of guy, but down walk these two massive-smiling South London lesbians, arm-in-arm. They told me how they went on a date to see Prince in Camden back in '96, before I was even born! They were like, "You better not sell it." And I said, "Don't you worry, if anyone wants it, they'll have to take it from my cold dead hands."

"My Name Is Prince" is one of my favorite songs. It's the inspiration for a lot of our stuff, because it has that sexy snare [and that] woman moaning. It's definitely something I rip off a lot. The attitude that Prince had onstage — how he managed to be hypermasculine and hyperfeminine at the same time — that's an inspiration. He's an icon. I'm proud to wear the emblem on my back.

FAVORITE SAD SUPERHERO PAINTING

*** "Batman: Bit of a prick" by Lee Ellis**

MATLOCK I got that in lockdown from one of our collaborators, [producer and ex-Prodigy drummer] Kieron Pepper. He knew that I was a fan. We were living in a big house in Northern Ireland, hiding out, and it just arrived. I thought it was a threat at first, because I didn't know that anyone knew our address. The décor [at the house] wasn't what I would call inspiring for an electronic punk-rock band... If you want to feel creative, you should have a few things dotted around that make you feel something. So, I put this piece up. It was great because there was a lot of despair in his eyes. It's a very relatable painting!

FAVORITE CATALYST FOR CHANGE

*** Hair Dye**

MATLOCK I first dyed my hair when I was 14. It's one of those very white-girl statements, but it rings very true: You can't control much in this world, so it's nice to be able to control the color of your hair. I think it's nice to look into the mirror and see someone different. You can dress different, but when you take your clothes off at the end of the day you look the same.

FAVORITE DAVE MUSTAINE-INSPIRED ACCESSORY
*** Bullet Belt**

MATLOCK What made you get one?

WAY You were copying Dave Mustaine, and then I was copying you. I guess that's the answer. We live in a part of London called Camden, and there's this weird old punk shop on High Street. It doesn't have a sign outside, so I can't tell you the name, but it's the only shop with bondage pants and army jackets outside. It's run by this Armenian guy; he loves a good barter. I ended up getting it for 100 quid, which is pretty good. Solid, real bullets! It's safe to say I've gotten my money's worth out of it. I wear it pretty much every day, and onstage. It really pulls together the whole stage look for me.

MATLOCK There's a uniform that comes with metal: You've got your blue jeans, your battle jacket, your band shirt — which you will be judged upon — your combat boots or high-tops, and you wear a fucking bullet belt. Gate-keeping and elitism are bad, but sometimes it helps to preserve the culture. Sometimes it's good to obey these rules. Thou shalt wear a bullet belt!

the ARMED

Hardcore's weirdest,
most mysterious band
finally comes clean

TEXT **Mia Hughes**
PHOTOGRAPHY **Aaron Jones**

FINALLY, TONY WOLSKI IS AN OPEN BOOK.

The Armed (clockwise from lower right), Kenny Szymanski, Randall Kupfer, Cara Drolshagen, Tony Wolski, Patrick Shiroishi and Urian Hackney

FANS OF THE ARMED – THE MYSTERIOUS DETROIT hardcore collective he fronts — have spent years envisioning Wolski (who used to go by the pseudonym Adam Vallely) and the band as solemn fitness monks, lifting weights at some compound and emerging only to scream into a mic; or nihilistic pranksters, sending journalists on wild goose chases while lying to their faces; or even possibly actors, hired as puppets by some shady corporation keen to profit off the punk subculture.

Nope. For his part, the 37-year-old Wolski is just your average suburban dad: warm, chatty, quick to crack a grin or laugh, thoughtful and thorough in conversation. He's wearing a fluorescent green beanie, a brightly beaded necklace and a T-shirt bearing the logo of Hungry Ducks Farm (a petting zoo in Charlevoix, Michigan) as he Zooms from his house in the Detroit suburb of Dearborn. The Armed are preparing to release their fifth album *Perfect Saviors* — and for the first time they're ready to tell you anything you want to know.

For much of their career, the Armed were a totally anonymous collective. Once attention ramped up enough that fans and journalists started digging into their identities, they revealed their faces and some names, but still made themselves as hard as possible to pin down. Press photos featured a revolving cast, not all of whom seemed to be in the band. Interviews were chaotic, marked with obfuscations and bizarre interactions and claims. The whole thing seemed to be a performance-art project as much as a band, though the music itself has always ruled — their take on hardcore bearing a new, more ambitious shape with each album, from 2009 debut *These Are Lights* and 2015's *Untitled* to 2018's *Only Love* and 2021's excellent *ULTRAPOP*. This year's *Perfect Saviors* presents the Armed exploring their biggest, poppiest, most arena-ready sounds yet. The shadowy collective has already become one of the scene's buzziest bands, and now — thanks in part to some high-profile cosigns by Queens of the Stone Age and fellow Detroit icon Iggy Pop — the Armed are about to infiltrate the mainstream.

Yet for all their eccentricity, their budding success isn't surprising. There's deep deliberateness to everything the Armed do and everything the Armed are — every move a *next* move, a purpose in mind. Their decision now to finally employ total honesty is no different.

"The anonymity was functional for what we were trying to do, which was to make this big, ego-free collaboration. But the inadvertent consequence of that was that the anonymity became a focal point that we weren't anticipating," Wolski explains at the beginning of our hour-long chat. "At this point, I don't think it's taking away any magic to show, actually, it's just a billion people, that's what it is. In a way, the anonymity is practically happening because there's just so many people."

He has a point, because while it's no longer a secret who does what in the Armed, it's still a daunting task to attempt to lay it out. The core lineup you'll see in the current press photos is Wolski (vocals), Kenny Szymanski (bass), Urian Hackney (drums), Cara Drolshagen (vocals), Randall Lee (guitar/vocals) and Patrick Shiroishi (sax/keys). There's also Dan Greene, who's been a key songwriter from the beginning, but doesn't play live or appear in any photos (a character called Dan Greene appears in some music videos, but he's played by an associate of the band, Trevor Naud).

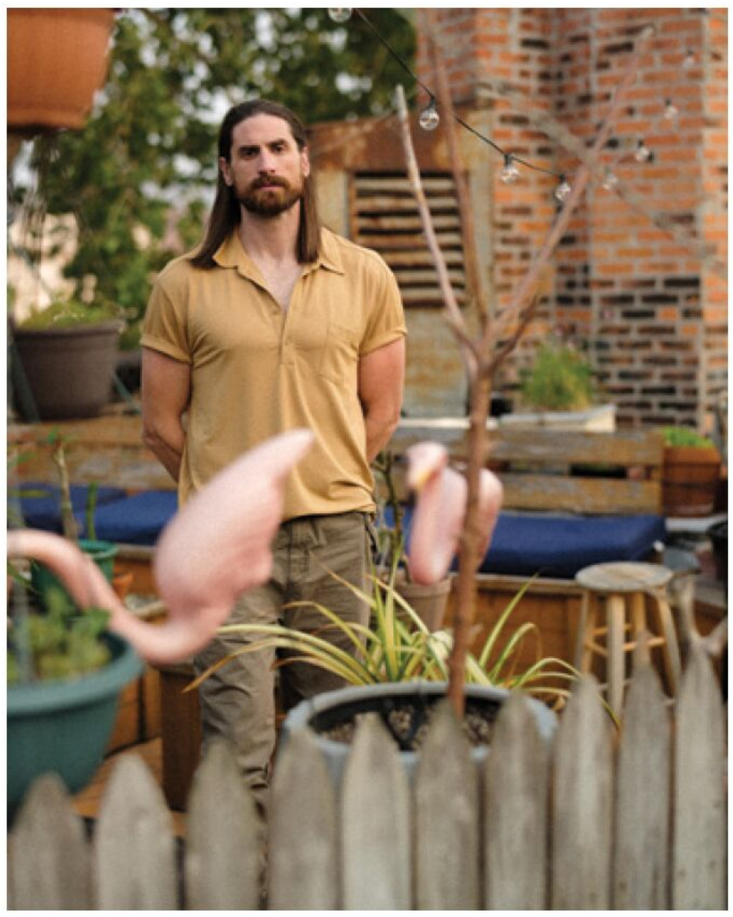
On top of that, Queens of the Stone Age's Troy Van Leeuwen co-produced and played on *Perfect Saviors* and has sometimes performed live with the band. There are also contributions from over a dozen more musicians, including boygenius' Julien Baker, Converge's Jacob Bannon and former Red Hot Chili Peppers guitarist Josh Klinghoffer. These people aren't just collaborators; if you've ever been a part of the Armed, you *are* the Armed.

"We're of a generation that grew up very much online, the first generation to have all this information constantly available to us," Wolski says. "And you just see people talking stupid shit all the time, like 'I don't like *this* drummer's drumming on this.' So, for us, the agreement from the beginning has always been, 'The Armed is the Armed.' We're not putting out a members list. We're still not defining the Armed as anything other than the Armed. It takes a village to make what we're putting out and the focus should always be on the village."

A side effect of that anonymity meant that the band could play up to their hype as performers — and the rabid fan devotion those performances attracted — without inviting any kind of parasocial weirdness. "I think a lot of the main folks in [the band] are relatively shy or private people, and it was really useful to get in the headspace of something that was so mission-oriented, where you can pretend like it's not even you," Wolski says. "It's almost like — did you ever watch *Twin Peaks*? It's like we were all *tulpas* of ourselves or something, like we were these alternate-reality versions of ourselves." They took that idea to the extreme on the album cycle for *ULTRAPOP,* where they all adopted a grueling bodybuilding routine and became absolutely jacked — an attempt to become larger-than-life — to mirror the album's commentary on massive-scale pop culture.

This is all very highbrow and conceptual for the world of hardcore punk, traditionally defined by simplicity and raw emotion. But then again, Wolski posits, all hardcore could be considered a kind of performance art. "I think in punk there's some weird [assumption] that you're just presenting *you*, as though hardcore shows happen in nature. I understand the *feeling* of wanting things to feel off the rails and out of control and in the moment. But this idea that, like, you're 'you' no matter what — I think it's a kind of naive way to look at art."

By day, Wolski is a filmmaker who works largely commercially in the advertising industry. (A few years ago, he was partially responsible for the Ford *Dragon Ball Z* commercials that went viral.) He was born and raised in



Detroit, part of a huge Polish family; his older brothers introduced him to hip-hop and alternative music as a little kid. Through grade school, he was in jazz band, but he eventually gravitated toward the gnarly heavy music coming out of his hometown. "You're exposed to really gritty stuff, really quickly," he says of growing up in the Motor City. "There wasn't some cool hardcore scene or anything like that, it was weirdo shit like Wolf Eyes." As he got older, Wolski and his cousin Kenny Szymanski (who currently plays bass in the Armed) would trade CDs and MP3s back and forth — "always really exciting, rambunctious, fucked-up music."

As a teenager, Wolski started playing music with a friend, Aaron Jones (who now handles most of the band's music videos), and in 2003, the two-piece started playing shows as the Armed. "We'd play a CD behind us and he'd play guitar and I'd scream," Wolski explains. "That teenage iteration had very little to do with what would become the Armed in the modern sense … It was really terrible, but the idea of trying to create the most intense shit we possibly could was there."

The next jump in the Armed's evolution happened in 2008 when Wolski and Szymanski started writing the music that would become their full-length debut, the following year's *These Are Lights*.

"Kenny and I were starting to write some music together and we took the name again," says Wolski. "That was the real first iteration of this current thing called the Armed, and we've been just hammering away at it since then." Beginning as a six-piece band, they soon expanded to become an unruly collection of members. They released music for free via their website at a time when that was still novel, and they would often record at Guitar Center with gear they didn't own. The mysterious Dan Greene ("the real person who participates in the writing of the music") has been with the band "since the beginning, initially doing lights and eventually writing music for the band," Wolski reveals. "He played guitar onstage for all of the [2018] *Only Love*-era shows, in the "All Futures" music video [from *ULTRAPOP*], but since then has participated mostly as a songwriter." Greene's penned the instrumentation for many of their songs, including the *Perfect Saviors* single "Sport of Form."

Of their current lineup, Wolski reports ("to the best of my recollection!") that Randall Lee joined shortly after they released their 2011 EP, *Young & Beautiful*, Cara Drolshagen made her first on-record performance on 2015's *Untitled* ("Enemies Closer") and Patrick Shiroishi has been a "looser player/collaborator" for the past couple years. (The keyboardist appears on *Perfect Saviors* and will make his live debut on the band's upcoming tour).

Before landing on Urian Hackney, the Armed had relied on a series of hotshot drummers. Converge's Ben Koller played on 2021's *ULTRAPOP* ("A LIFE SO WONDERFUL" and "BIG SHELL"), most of *Only Love* and a couple one-offs: "Night City Aliens" and "FT. FRANK TURNER" (the latter arriving with a video of skateboarders in furry monster suits, which Tony Hawk shared along with an insinuation that he *might* be one of the masked skaters). Former Dillinger Escape Plan drummer Chris Pennie played on 2010's *Common Enemies* EP ("Second Hand"), 2011's *Young & Beautiful* ("Mujahoudini") and all of 2012's *Spreading Joy*, while Baptists' Nick Yacyshyn handled the kit on *Untitled*. Wolski met their current drummer, Hackney, through Kurt Ballou.

Speaking of which, Armed diehards have long speculated that the Converge guitarist-producer has had a major songwriting role in the band, with some conspiracists even wagering that he's the actual Dan Greene Svengali figure pulling the strings. Wolski confirms that Ballou has worked with the Armed in some capacity as mixer, recorder or producer on many of their previous albums and EPs, including *Perfect Saviors* (for which he recorded Jacob Bannon's parts).

Musically, the Armed have shape-shifted with every release since 2009's *These Are Lights*, and while they've increasingly been experimenting with pop ideas, *Perfect Saviors* is easily their biggest departure from traditionally heavy music. There aren't really songs on here that sound like the Dillinger Escape Plan or Converge. There are ones that you could compare to David Bowie ("Modern Vanity"), the Strokes ("Clone") or the Happy Mondays ("Burned Mind"). The groovy, funky "Liar 2" is impossibly poppy, and a definite contender for one of the year's best songs. Lead single "Sport of Form" is one of the most left-field cuts, splicing between abrasive noise and sweetly crooned vocals — featuring an assist from indie-rock laureate Julien Baker, and a

music video cameo where Iggy Pop plays God himself.

"We found out Iggy had played some of our music on his BBC radio show and were so thrilled and blown away. We pretty quickly wrote to him about doing something for the new record," Wolski says. "He was quick to get back that he couldn't play on it, but he'd love to be in a video. The entire experience was super surreal, but he was nothing but incredibly generous with his time and creativity, and he seemed legitimately interested in what we were doing. It was mind-blowing. Growing up in Detroit, there is no one beyond Iggy."

Perfect Saviors may be the band's most approachable record yet, but make no mistake, the Armed haven't gone radio rock. All of these sounds are filtered through layers and layers of unsettling, jittery noise. It's as maximalist and extreme as the Armed have ever been; it's just that this time, their sense of accessibility and immediacy is what's cranked to the maximum.

"The thing we try to do desperately is to remain novel in our approach," says Wolski. "Everyone in the band has, to some extent, a visual arts background, and I think we kind of approach everything in the tradition of other fine arts — you gotta create your niche, you gotta have your overarching messages, but you gotta find ways to do new and exciting things."

He adds, "There is a layer of disconnect that we wanted to eliminate from this record. Like, I think the tenth time you listen to this album, you'll like it more than you liked it the first time. But for the first time, we've made an album that you can like the first time, too."

"DIY is not an aesthetic, it's a fucking attitude and a relentlessness. That's how we have always done all this shit." — Tony Wolski

With these songs coming together, the Armed were faced with the task of doing justice to their big ideas without anything close to a major-label budget. "It's not like we have a million dollars to make it," Wolski says. "So it was like, what can we do to still get that million-dollar record [sound] out of this?" They recorded in various studios across the country, wherever they could call in favors and make it work, couch-surfing wherever they went. Troy Van Leeuwen was on tour with Jane's Addiction, filling in for Dave Navarro, while recording was in progress. On his off days, he'd catch a red-eye to meet the Armed in the studio, then fly back out to rejoin the tour.

"The cool thing about growing up in Detroit is very quickly you learn that there's not this huge support network for you creatively — it's like, we got *us*," Wolski says. "That teaches you the lesson of what DIY actually is. It's not an aesthetic, it's a fucking attitude and a relentlessness. That's how we have always done all this shit."

This summer, the Armed will be taking *Perfect Saviors* out to their biggest venues yet in support of Queens of the Stone Age's The End Is Nero amphitheater tour. It's the perfect opportunity to do exactly what the Armed are always striving for — to make people stop and think. "We're such a fucking freak show [live]," Wolski says with a grin. "I think when you go to see Queens of the Stone Age play at the McDonalds Rock Financial Amphitheatre of whatever the fuck, you don't anticipate that. There's going to be a bunch of drunk people trying to find their seats, and we're going to try to make as big an impact on them as possible, by any means possible."

He adds, "When I was in middle school I saw At the Drive-In open for Rage Against the Machine. I fucking hated them. In two weeks, they were my favorite band in the whole fucking world. That's what art is to me."

Now that the Armed have shed some of the mysteries that have shrouded them for so long, what becomes clear is the purity at the heart of the project. The Armed care deeply about their art — not out of self-seriousness, but because it's what they have to give. A few days after our conversation, Wolski follows up with an email to offer up the mantra that the Armed have operated with since the start: "Give everyone as much as you can. Make it the best thing you can possibly put together. Be the best thing." Ⓡ

Q&A: Amalie Bruun

Myrkur's mastermind on how her son, Valkyries and black metal led her back to humanity

TEXT Gregory Adams
PHOTOGRAPHY Gobinder Jhitta

MYRKUR'S AMALIE BRUUN HAS SPENT THE EARLY SUMMER DEEP WITHIN AN ancient Danish forest — much of that time at an outdoor venue north of Copenhagen, waiting for her cue to rush out and crush through the metal music she was asked to supply to *Ragnarök*, a stage adaptation of one of Norse mythology's most famous apocalyptic tales. The open-air performance in Dyrehaven is an elaborate one — its story of love, death and ecological ruin dramatically presented through pyro, sword swinging, high-flying acrobats and heavy music. While Bruun has been the principal force of Myrkur's black-metal-exploring sound since she founded the solo project nearly a decade ago, she's been enjoying the refreshingly communal drive of *Ragnarök.*

"It's been a humbling experience, because there's like 100 people involved, and everyone plays a very important part in this to make it work," she says. "I'm so used to everything falling on me. This the opposite."

Bruun was introduced to local theater as a child growing up in Denmark, though the musician admits she was mainly interested in ballet performances at the time. By comparison, the staging of *Ragnarök* arrives in an interesting period where the brutal foundations of black metal can be woven into high art, here sanctioned by the Royal Danish Theatre. Bruun's keenly aware of the aesthetic incongruencies. When Bruun was first approached about the project, she assumed the producers were after family-friendly music closer to the opaline acoustic treatments of Myrkur's 2019 full-length *Folkesange*.

"They told me it was a play based on the Ragnarök myth. I was certain they would ask for Nordic folk music," Bruun recalls about those first meetings with the producers. "I was quite surprised when they were like, 'No, we love your black-metal-inspired music; the dark and cinematic stuff,' like my [2017] album, *Mareidt*. But I constantly had it in mind that there will be children there, and normal people who don't care about metal. So, it has tons of metal in it, but it's also melodic — people like it; they don't think it's too scary."

While Bruun has been reveling in *Ragnarök*'s camaraderie, it wasn't too long ago that she was ruminating on the physical and emotional barriers the pandemic had built between us. Though Bruun notes she's led a reclusive life — she kept her identity hidden in the early days of Myrkur — feelings of isolation intensified in the COVID era, just as she was giving birth to her first child. This all manifests on Myrkur's new, genre-defying *Spine*, where Bruun fuses bomb blasts and shrieked vocals with new-age chamber music ("My Blood Is Gold") and four-on-the-floor-driven synth-pop ("Mothlike").

Speaking with *Revolver*, Bruun reveals how human connection, her son, noble Valkyries, and the rise of artificial intelligence strengthened her *Spine*.

HOW DO THE THEMES WITHIN THE RAGNARÖK MYTH — THE BATTLE OF THE GODS, ENVIRONMENTAL DISASTERS, THE APOCALYPSE — SPEAK TO YOU IN MODERN TIMES, FACED WITH THINGS LIKE CLIMATE CHANGE, FOR EXAMPLE?
AMALIE BRUUN Well, the script was written by Kim Fupz Aakeson, who has written a lot of children's books and some pretty successful screenplays. It's in his words; it's obviously based on the Ragnarök myth, but it talks a lot about love, instead of revenge, and what happens when the gods get bored and lazy. They drink too much, and they get tricked by the enemy [god Loki] because they live this pointless life of debauchery.

But in terms of climate change, it's hard not to think about that when you see more and more natural disasters happening. Everything's burning, or flooding. I think a lot of people do feel that connection [with Ragnarök].

VALKYRIES APPEAR IN *RAGNARÖK* AND ON *SPINE*'S "VALKYRIERNES SANG." WHAT ATTRACTS YOU TO THE LORE OF THOSE CHARACTERS? I was reading different interpretations of the old sagas and the old poems, and I just loved the ones about the Valkyries. They're cool mythological characters: Odin's female warriors that ride around finding the fallen ones to say, "You can go to Valhalla… but you can't!" It's inspiring.

WERE YOU WRITING THE MUSIC TO *RAGNARÖK* AND *SPINE* SIMULTANEOUSLY? Believe it or not, I wrote *Spine* first; I got asked to do *Ragnarök* after. But I was already working on this concept album that didn't end up happening. I had this idea that I would write a complete album about Norse mythology — not to record it, but to perform live once on a Viking ship. I started going deep into research and visiting historic places around Denmark from the Viking Age. But then I got asked to do *Ragnarök* and thought I might use the research for this instead.

WHAT KIND OF SITES WERE YOU VISITING? Old Viking castles. There's one called Fyrkat, where you can see the graves of the Vølve — they're sort of like Seeresses, [women] said to have the ability to foretell future events and perform sorcery. They're the ones that told the story of Ragnarök. They were believed to speak directly for Odin.

GETTING INTO THE MUSIC ON *SPINE*, HOW EASY WAS IT FOR YOU TO TAP BACK INTO THE BLACK-METAL SIDE OF YOUR SONGWRITING AFTER HAVING DELIVERED THE MORE MUTED, ACOUSTIC TONES OF *FOLKESANGE*? I felt a need to do that, because I hadn't written music in so long. I was stuck. I wasn't going through the easiest time of my life, after becoming a mom. I didn't want to play music. And the worse I felt, the less I'd write music. Actually, my husband said, "Isn't this the time that you should be writing songs?"

I realized I wanted to pick up instruments that created a different type of sound [than what was on *Folkesange*]. I don't want to make acoustic music right now. Once I did that, I felt a door had opened again. That's what metal does to a lot of people; it's very healing.

IT SEEMS LIKE A SIMPLE, ALMOST IGNORANT WAY TO PHRASE THIS, BUT HOW HAS THE EXPERIENCE OF MOTHERHOOD CHANGED YOU? Besides all the obvious things that everyone would say — like, "Wow, I created life," or "What is this very human but at the same time supernatural process?" — I had to become a new human. They say you give birth to a new human, but you're also giving birth to [your life as] a mother. I had to start fresh, just like my baby. That was tough! So, that is a part of what this album is about.

The song "Spine" was because I went through one of those sonograms, and I was so worried. Like, "Is everything OK? Is he going to stay in my belly?" Then the midwife said, "There's his spine! Look at how little his spine is!" And [then I realized] I gotta cut myself some slack: I'm growing a spine. Give him a chance. He's forming; he's becoming something here.

YOU BRING UP HUMANITY A FEW TIMES ON THE NEW ALBUM. THE CHORUS TO "LIKE HUMANS," HINGES AROUND THAT LINE, "TALK TO ME LIKE HUMANS DO," AND ON "SPINE" YOU SING, "YOU MAKE ME HUMAN." HOW CONNECTED HAVE YOU FELT TO PEOPLE THESE PAST FEW YEARS? It's been such a hurricane of emotions. Doing the most natural, human thing possible — making a child, giving birth to it and taking care of it — and then going into the most unnatural period of time that's happened, at least in my lifetime, [with the pandemic] … The world has seemed so disconnected from nature in a way that I didn't think was possible.

I didn't think it could get any worse — between smartphones, artificial intelligence and people already being so disconnected from human nature — but then with the fucking lockdown, everything became about disease … and no human contact. Going through that was tough, to say the least. I have sometimes had feelings that I didn't belong anywhere, this feeling that a lot of people struggle with. But then when I had my child, I feel like it made me human. I felt so grateful.

WHAT TROUBLES YOU ABOUT ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE? Nothing in particular … But we know by now that screens, robots and computers — anything that's that disconnected from the lizard brain — aren't good for your mental health.

It's troubling me that it's no longer humans making art, big decisions or even shooting people in wars. The human has been taken away [from many aspects of life]. It's sort of a *Planet of the Apes* thing that's going on, except the apes weren't really smarter than the humans. We know AI is going to be a million times smarter than a human brain. I got preoccupied with things like this once I had a child. Now I'm like, "This is what I'm sending him into? How's he going to deal?"

THERE'S AI OUT THERE CREATING DUETS BETWEEN DRAKE AND THE WEEKND; GRIMES IS INVITING PEOPLE TO MAKE SONGS USING AI MODELED AFTER HER VOICE. WHAT WOULD YOU THINK OF SOMEONE MAKING MUSIC SIMILAR TO MYRKUR'S WITH THE DIGITAL ESSENCE OF YOUR VOICE? I mean, I'm sure it's just a matter of time. Music has increasingly become playlist- and mood-based. More and more, you're being rewarded for sounding like something else, because that is what people go for. And in a way, we already know Spotify tells artists, "Don't complain about our low streaming revenue, just do more fucking albums." Now we're realizing we can just get AI to [make new music]; they can do what Spotify wants.

Now, to the human ears and hearts: Is [AI-generated music] good enough? Is the Drake AI good enough? And if you can just recreate any current popular artist, was their music ever really good? Or is AI just that [sophisticated]? I don't know…

THE CROSS-POLLINATION OF GENRES YOU'RE BRINGING TO *SPINE* SEEMS LIKE IT COULD OVERWHELM, OR EVEN CONFUSE, A STREAMING SERVICE'S ALGORITHM. That's seen as a very negative thing, from most of the music industry's point of view. Exploring experimental, fusion-y stuff's not good for business, because how are you going to sell it? How is it going to sound like anything else that hits the echo chamber? I obviously don't care! I have nothing to lose, and I have a record label [in Relapse Records] that also doesn't care; they stopped predicting what I'm going to send them. I like that. But at the end of the day, I believe that human beings appreciate [diversity]; and that they like to be challenged. They like that there's a great guitar player playing a solo.

THE TITLE TO *SPINE*'S FINAL TRACK, "MENNESKEBARN," ROUGHLY TRANSLATES TO "HUMAN CHILD." IS IT A FAIR ASSUMPTION THAT THIS SONG WAS INSPIRED BY YOUR SON? It's just a lullaby for him. It's so beautiful when you start seeing the world through your child's eyes — it's simple; it's colorful; it's great and inspiring. Everything is new to him, and that gave me such life. These things that we take for granted, they become special again. It's become special for me again.

DO YOU FEEL MORE CONNECTED TO HUMANITY THAN YOU DID AT THE OUTSET OF THIS PROJECT? Absolutely. I now realize that I have spent most of my life avoiding people. I have spent so much time feeling misunderstood, or just not wanting to interact at all. Other people exhausted the hell out of me. Once I had a child that started to soften up. I started to realize that not only do I need other humans, but I want other humans [in my life]. I'm seeing what that does to my child, and how much he loves the whole idea of a village.

BRINGING THINGS BACK TO *RAGNARÖK*, YOU COULD SAY IT'S TAKEN A VILLAGE TO PUT ON THAT KIND OF LARGE-SCALE PERFORMANCE. HOW WOULD YOU THINK THE EXPERIENCE OF THIS PRODUCTION COULD INFLUENCE FUTURE MYRKUR PERFORMANCES? When I think about [whether] I'm going to tour *Spine*, I would like to do the opposite. I just want to play with a live band. I'm very into the production, the mystery and the role-playing of black metal, but I just want to turn the lights off and play the album. [*Laughs*] Like, just put all the energy and focus on the music itself.

"I have spent most of my life avoiding people. I've spent so much time feeling misunderstood. Other people exhausted the hell out of me. Once I had a child that started to soften up."
— Amalie Bruun

ROMAIN BALLEZ

Madi Watkins

During the making of this issue, on June 28th, one of our favorite hardcore bands Year of the Knife were involved in a serious accident when their van collided with an 18-wheeler after their show in Salt Lake City. Vocalist Madi Watkins sustained the most severe injuries, which left her in critical condition. Madi has since been moved to a rehabilitation care facility, where her husband and bandmate, Brandon, reports "everything is moving in a positive direction" with her physical and cognitive recovery, but there's still a way to go until she's "back to 100 percent." With continuing medical expenses, the whole band still need help.

Please consider donating at gofundme.com/f/yotk-recovery-fund

SUBSCRIBE

One-year (4 issues) for $25.00
RevolverMag.com/Subscribe

REVOLVER

FALL HARD

INTO THESE SHOWS

AVENGED SEVENFOLD

with special guests

FALLING IN REVERSE

KIM DRACULA

LIFE IS BUT A DREAM...
NORTH AMERICAN TOUR PT. 2

THE TOURING THE END OF THE WORLD TOUR

MOTIONLESS IN WHITE

KNOCKED LOOSE

AFTER THE BURIAL

ALPHAWOLF

WORLD TOUR 2023

COREY TAYLOR

*WITH WARGASM
OXYMORRONS
LUNA AURA

*SUPPORT VARIES BY CITY

THE

BABYKLOK

TOUR 2023

BABYMETAL

DETHKLOK

JASON RICHARDSON

TICKETS ON SALE NOW AT LIVE NATION